





## A CONTINENT EXPERIMENTS





*C.B. Bidwood*

# A Continent Experiments

A picture of the present and conjecture  
for the future with a few memories from  
the past.

By  
Lt.-Colonel The Hon. C. B. BIRDWOOD, M.V.O.

## INTRODUCTION

by  
The EARL of HALIFAX, K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.  
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formerly Viceroy of India.

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## DEDICATION

To that voice of India which is mute.

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## INTRODUCTION

I AM HAPPY TO WRITE AN INTRODUCTION TO COLONEL BIRDWOOD'S BOOK, not only because the author is the son of an old friend who has served India well, but also because in my judgment it gives, fairly and clearly, the background of India to-day and of its many problems.

To any thoughtful reader of this book certain reflections will probably occur. However anxious we may be to accelerate and complete the progress of India towards self-government, true and informed lovers of India will be careful of attempting short cuts. For these may easily lead that country into a quagmire of trouble in which the gains of a century would be utterly submerged. What seems the longest way round may well be the shortest way home.

No one who knows India would claim to be an unerring guide through all its complexities or to be possessed of an infallible answer to all its problems. Colonel Birdwood certainly makes no such claim ; and he shows himself fully aware that behind the political issues, which bulk so largely in the public eye, is an economic problem quite as stubborn and possibly even more relevant to the well-being of India and its peoples.

Finally, it is certain that, in any survey of the Indian scene, one truth is as applicable now as it has ever been. No Briton can write worthily about India who has not acquired a genuine affection for the land and those who dwell in it. That is an essential condition of authorship, and the pages of Colonel Birdwood's book show that he possesses this final qualification in ample measure.

*Halifax*

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British Embassy,  
Washington, D.C.

25th October, 1945.



## PREFACE

LONG BEFORE THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES MEANT ANYTHING TO ME—AND I regret that even to-day I am little the wiser—the music of the Preacher's words had its appeal : “Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness to the flesh.”

Whence then the ever-constant and irritating urge? the desire to tell, even to teach, which drives a pen forward in relentless and eternal expansion of knowledge? A psychologist may have the answer. For me it is enough to admit it only as a fact and to claim, in some sense of comforting self-righteousness, that we write generally when we think we have something worth saying. Nevertheless, for a time I was undecided over an attempt to write on India. The Indian literature is now so vast that to add another contribution to an overburdened library might seem superfluous.

And then I looked at the range of comment pouring from both enlightened and unenlightened sources. On the side of enlightenment there were the three volumes of Professor Coupland<sup>1</sup> with their penetrating analysis of the constitutional position, a work which made me wonder if those in Parliament or journalism in either England or America, those who so often champion India's freedom without attention to further detail, could ever have studied their subject with more than superficial application. To me it seemed that these men and women were for ever fitting existing facts into their own particular political theories, rather than building the needs of the situation on those facts.

How very satisfactory it would be for the more accurate information of a gullible but well-meaning public if members of organizations<sup>2</sup> purporting to speak for India could undertake some form of curriculum of instruction before committing themselves to expressions of opinion. For myself, as a student setting out to write, I would wish for a minimum period of a year in the country during which I should hope to complete the following programme :—

- (a) Discussions with leading personalities representing each of the major organizations, the Indian National Congress, the Moslem League, the All-India Hindu Mahasabha, the Scheduled Castes, and the Sikhs.
- (b) Meetings with leaders of the minor organizations, Communists, Social Democrats, Arya Samajists, Khaksars, Ahrars, and the Liberal Federation.
- (c) Study the Central Assembly in session.
- (d) Study at least one Provincial Assembly in session.

<sup>1</sup> *Report on the Constitutional Problem in India* Parts I, II and III. Prof. R. Coupland.

<sup>2</sup> Such organizations are the India League and the Anti-Labour Laws and Victims Defence Committee in England, and the Friends of India Society in America.



- (e) Discussions with members of the Viceroy's Executive Council.
- (f) Visit two or three Indian States, including for preference one large modernized State such as Mysore or Baroda, and one of the smaller picturesque variety, preferably in Rajputana or Central India.
- (g) Arrange to stay a few days with both an Indian and a British Deputy Commissioner, when the following aspects of administration would be noted: the working of a tehsil and a tehsildar's court, visits to all types of schools, government dispensaries and hospitals, villages, irrigation arrangements, the Police, the operation of a District Board and a Municipality; and if the opportunity occurs, watch a municipal election.
- (h) Discussions with Government Secretaries both in Delhi and the Provinces. Talks with Provincial Ministers.
- (i) Study labour conditions in a large British and an Indian industrial concern.
- (j) Interview the Commander-in-Chief and arrange to spend a few days with a regular unit of the Indian Army.
- (k) Visit Madura, Tanjore, Ellora, Ajanta, Agra, Chittor, Mount Abu, Benares, Taxila; the list is interminable.
- (l) Learn a little of the language.

I wonder how many of those well-intentioned persons referred to have completed even a small portion of the above programme. Yet I can see little less as qualifying a man to speak on India with any authority.

In speaking of journalism I do not for a moment deny the quality of much intelligent interpretation with which journalists have enriched their observations, nor do I underestimate the value of an intimate personal sketch when based on a balanced assessment of character. My criticism of visiting journalists is based on two premises: first, too many have judged the whole problem on brief contacts with a few political personalities, and secondly they invariably ignore the existing machinery of administration. Any young enthusiast from an English or American newspaper who can manipulate an interview with Mr. Gandhi then considers himself qualified to pass sweeping judgment on the entire range and complexity of Indian affairs. Political leadership is obviously the keystone in the architectural plan for India's future. But in regarding this or that leader as the all-powerful mouthpiece of his community, we are asked to judge a nation's political acumen from the example of a few good men, rather than by the average level of political or administrative ability. One great leader does not represent a nation, although he will exercise an influence in national or international affairs out of all proportion to the educational standard of his people in terms of modern requirements.

The second charge against those who write up India is their disregard of the existing civil administration.<sup>1</sup> I have recently read three short books purporting to analyse the Indian problem and not one has mentioned a tehsildar or a patwari. I do not necessarily ask for approval. I only suggest cognizance of its existence and its structure.

Few works recently published have paid sufficient attention to Defence and a host of problems which arise in connection with the Army or Armies of the future. The subject is also given little attention by the Indian public and I have therefore attempted to give Defence its due prominence. At the same time I have taken the opportunity to add a word about the Indian soldier and his background, for here I am on familiar ground.

I have weighed my qualifications to write on India as compared with others with greater opportunity to voice their opinion. As an officer of the Army I have about twenty-five years of Indian service. That, in itself, is not necessarily a qualification, for a soldier may well drift through his time in the East and finish with a parade of objective events, light and of little consequence, material enough for a readable diary, but in no way reflecting a reciprocal impression of any permanent value. For years mine was the normal routine of a regimental officer. There were periods of attachment to the Frontier Constabulary and to one of the Frontier Militias and there were two and a half pleasant years on the staff of the Governor of Bombay. There was also a short and memorable interlude as an A.D.C. to my father during his period as Commander-in-Chief.

It was not however until the luck of the draw gave me an appointment in the Civil Liaison Organization that I came to realize my own profound ignorance of Indian affairs. I was then for two years in close contact with Indian village life and felt, at the end, reasonably qualified to add my quota of experience to those of others who sometimes brilliantly, yet often hastily, record the Indian scene. There followed an appointment as a Resettlement Liaison Officer under a new Directorate of G.H.Q., set up to attend to the business of resettling service men into civil life, whether on the land or into technical professions. This placed me in close touch with two Provincial Governments and it proved an experience of value. Rather naturally I found myself slipping into comparisons of civil and military methods, and I have set down my conclusions.

I tried always to meet such political leaders as crossed my path and these later appointments afforded opportunity to make contacts with some of the players on the political stage. But I can claim no spectacular interviews with the political stars of the day: rather is this a record of innumerable friendships made with men of little publicity; lawyers, bankers, station-masters, postmasters, minor officials, rich and poor. It is my belief that these comprise that powerful middle piece of Indian society whose influence is rising rapidly and whose voice will be heard at the polls in the post-war elections.

<sup>1</sup> Some details of the administration are given in Appendix IV.

While writing, I found myself satisfying a desire to set down much idle reminiscence of small consequence. Thus this book took shape in two parts. There was the more factual material for a serious student, while in contrast was the lighter side of average human reaction to environment. In Part I, which tells of facts and politics, I claim no depth of research, but only to have recorded the kind of picture I myself would have welcomed when I came to India as an officer in 1919. These chapters might be regarded as a kind of "India without tears," a book for a student who starts at the beginning. In the second portion I have turned to my diary and allowed the day-to-day events of life to take control.

I have attempted to arrange chapters so that any one of them can be read separately; the more necessary since certain passages, such as the work of the Indian Soldiers' Board<sup>1</sup> or the Civil Liaison Organization may not be of deep interest to the general public. These, however, were matters of which I had intimate experience and which no one has recorded before; so that the reader who can face up to a dull caption will certainly find something new.

Though the study of India may fall conveniently into separate chapters and a number of tabulated headings, yet the problem is one. Each piece in the puzzle has its individuality. Yet if a piece is missing the picture is not complete. For a writer this means a certain inevitable overlap and repetition in chapters which the indulgent reader will accept.

Yet a further warning is that there will be found little reference to the past. The historian and the archæologist have laboured hard for India and so this book is essentially of the present and the future. I understand that Mrs. Sarojini Naidu has always advocated the realistic approach that, however glorious India's historical background may have been, little will be achieved by merely resting on ancient laurels. How true!

In recording recent history and the sequel of political events the difficulties of an ever-changing scene are experienced. If, for instance, by the time these impressions are before the public, there is a coalition Executive with Congress and League representation functioning with sober purpose at the centre—as well there may be—then much present comment will become of fading academic interest only. A situation of deadlock to-day may well be one of compromise to-morrow; and in the meanwhile a writer must go to print! This will also be generously accepted, for, while details change, the great principles of nation-building and experiment inflexibly continue. So far as was possible I had perforce to resort to the rather unsatisfactory method of the addition of footnotes embodying fresh developments as time went by.

I have dispensed with the usual chapter of facts and figures and instead have listed some statistical information in Appendices with a Glossary.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Now known as "The Indian Sailors', Soldiers' and Airmen's Board."

<sup>2</sup> I have found it more natural to use in the text the Urdu or Hindi words which are in common use in India. But in each case the meaning will be found in the glossary.

One small admission is due. Though I have travelled across the Indian Continent from Kashmir to Cape Comorin and from Quetta to Calcutta, the greater portion of my experience is with the Punjab and the North-West Frontier Province. I am aware that the pattern of life in the North and the outlook of a Punjabi are not those of Central or South India or of Bengal. Many Englishmen absorb a provincial bias and this may be so in my own case. The general administrative machine, however, is much the same in one Province as in another, except that the titles of officials and names of administrative areas vary. With this admission, I yet claim to have studied the All-India problem with an open mind and I do not think that my conclusions will unduly bear the stamp of uneven experience.

At times judgment will appear harsh, both on Indians and my own countrymen; but it is no use writing this type of work only to please. I have been concerned to submit myself to one test: have I believed each claim and assertion to be true? It is so much easier to lie on paper than in speech! It may for a time be undiplomatic to record what one believes to be true: it can never ultimately be wrong. A man's first reactions to a statement which shocks him are seldom the same as those matured after constant reflection. In no other way can any value be attached either to present-day planning or to the future recording of history, except on the basis of a writer setting out both the palatable and the less acceptable aspects of human affairs. It would be easy to omit those elements of criticism which fell unsympathetically for the reader's ear and leave only a picture of a path of roses. But it would be of little value.

The quality of truth needs to be realized. It is seldom either black or white, but is found in varying tones of grey, sometimes dark or sometimes pale. It is easy to say "Hitler caused the war," or "Beethoven's music is beautiful," or "India demands and deserves freedom." But these are statements only tending to truth, and in each case the whole truth would cover many pages in which would eventually be struck the final balance after the assessment of every source of evidence.

Thus, even when I claim to have written from complete conviction, my conclusions may be only a contribution to eventual truth. Frequently I have indeed been handicapped by conflicting sympathies and have found firm conclusions elusive.

The interpretations placed on a book on India in modern times are often so wild and presumptive that I should make it clear that both comment on the past and speculation on the future are mine and mine only, and that opinions expressed carry no official sanction whatsoever.

If I could choose the category into which I would wish this book to fall, I would ask that it could be regarded as a serious contribution to the evidence before those whose colossal burden it will soon be to frame great decisions. I would like also that there should be found here a collection of less formidable memories, the accumulation of twenty-five

years of varied experience. Perhaps I am greedy and perhaps in attempting to satisfy many tastes I have ended in satisfying none. Perhaps then the preacher was right!

I think a final word is due concerning the dedication. India's leaders rightly base a nostalgia for a new order on a desire to do their best by the under-nourished, illiterate and poverty-stricken millions. Without such a background their politics would indeed be colourless.

I would have them believe that many Englishmen share that desire; not possibly with the personal passion which an Indian alone can express for his fellow-countrymen, but nevertheless with all the constant appreciation of a great wrong which is to be set right.

In my wanderings through the Punjab villages I have felt that overwhelming sense of despair at the standard of life which must come to any thinking man. And so I also plead the right to dedicate my book to the mute millions of India in the deep and sober hope that whatever Government they may receive, to guide them in future years, may be for their contentment, their uplift, their fuller life and their greater happiness.

C.B. Bickson

Cavalry Club,  
127, Piccadilly, W.1.

### Note on the design of the Book-Cover

*The first emblem is that of the Sikhs, a double-edged dagger imposed on a quoit, both made of steel. The respect for steel was enjoined on the community by successive leaders. The emblem on a flag pole, draped in yellow cloth, is to be seen flying from any Sikh temple.*

*The second, that of the Indian National Congress, calls for no comment. It is of comparatively recent adoption.*

*In the case of the Moslem League emblem, the Crescent may have its origin as a symbol from the time of the siege of Byzantium by Philip of Macedon. It is related that the sudden appearance of the moon set the dogs barking, which in turn roused the inhabitants in time to frustrate the enemy. The Crescent was then adopted as the badge of the city and the Turks assumed it when they captured Constantinople in 1453. It, however, also appears on the standards of the earlier Ottoman Turk Sultans, while the worship of the moon and the stars is traditional in the Yemen. Doubt and speculation therefore surrounds its origin. I understand that the stars each represent a State of the original Pakistan conception, though the London Moslem League office neither confirm nor deny this.*

*The fourth emblem, the swastika, is that of the Hindu Mahasabha. Of the many examples in history where the swastika has been adopted as a symbol, that of its Indian association is by far the oldest.*

*While the word Swa-asti-ha is Sanskrit, meaning "that which is well being," there are traces of the use of the emblem by the ancient civilization of Mohenjo Daro, which in turn adopted it from Dravidian India. It is possible that town planning with defence in view had much to do with its adoption, the two main roads of a town crossing at the centre, the ends being closed by additional arms at right angles. Hitler, presumably, adopted the left-hand swastika for its Aryan association, the right-handed or clockwise pattern being the older traditional emblem.*

*Saffron, the background, is the familiar colour worn by all Hindu ascetics and it has been adopted also by Moslems and other Indian religious orders. Its application is to the roving monastic type rather than to an organized priesthood.*

## CHAPTER I

### THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

IT IS RIGHT TO RING UP THE CURTAIN ON THE INDIAN SCENE WITH A STUDY of the largest and most powerful organization in the land; and it is perhaps a justifiable and encouraging symptom of national India that in a land where there is much confused thought and method and where indigenous organizing power often seems dormant, the Indian National Congress in its internal administration displays executive organization of the highest order. We may disagree with its policy; but viewed objectively we appreciate that it handles its own affairs with a sense of responsibility, discipline and ability, which is hardly evident in the day-to-day experiences of the national life. This in itself is a matter for hope, for it indicates that, with the normal ability to profit from past mistakes, there are in the Continent the foundations of sound good government once communal problems are solved.

Here then is an attempt to give the reader a bird's-eye view both of the Congress organization and its recent history; enough at least to dispel the misapprehension which exists in some quarters abroad that the All-India National Congress is in any way analogous to the Congress of America, yet avoiding a mass of detail which would leave a student missing the wood for the trees.

The constitution of the Congress is set out in twenty-five Articles. Any Indian over the age of eighteen who subscribes to the declared object<sup>1</sup> may, on a written witnessed application, become a member on an annual payment of four annas. Three annas of his subscription goes to the Local or District Committee and the fourth goes to the central administration, the All-India National Congress. The annual subscription demanded of privileged members of the All-India Congress Committee is ten rupees.

There is an elaborate structure of small Local Committees, Provincial Committees, the All-India Committee which holds the annual session of the Congress, and finally, the Working Committee which exercises almost fascist control over its units and sub-units in the Provinces.

Congress divisions do not entirely conform to provincial boundaries and there are twenty Congress Provinces, based, as I understand, on linguistic differences, as contrasted with the eleven Provinces of British India.

A condition of membership of any Committee is that the member must be an habitual wearer of handspun khaddar and no person who deals in foreign cloth or British goods or who carries on trade in liquor can hold executive office or be a member of a Committee. As a matter

<sup>1</sup> The object as defined in Article I of the Constitution is "The attainment of complete independence (purna swaraj) by all legitimate and peaceful means."

of practice, most of the ordinary members of Congress wear khaddar throughout the year. Provincial Committees are elected on a basis of one member to every five hundred ordinary members. The members of provincial Committees then elect their representatives to the All-India Congress Committee on a basis of one-eighth of their membership. Thus the indirect system of election is followed.

Members of provincial Committees are known as "delegates" and it is they who meet at the annual session of the All-India National Congress.

The President of the Congress is annually elected at the session on a comprehensive system of election by the delegates.

Previous to the session the All-India Congress Committee meets as a "Subjects Committee" to set up and review the programme for the session and to frame resolutions. The final authority in the chain is the Working Committee<sup>1</sup> consisting of the President, thirteen members and a Treasurer. It is interesting to note that the thirteen members are not elected by the All-India Congress Committee but are appointed from among its membership by the President. Thus, it would seem that the principle of executive authority being appointed not from an elected Legislature, but by one man, is not necessarily peculiar to the Central Government of India!

Included in the Working Committee are three General Secretaries in charge of the three zones into which the twenty Provinces are divided. The zones, to a certain degree, recognize the distinctive identity of Moslem India, for the President himself, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, is in charge of the Moslem zone which includes the North-West area and Bengal, the other two zones being Bihar, Assam and Orissa under Dr. Rajendra Prasad and South India under Sardar Vallabhai Patel. The total membership, which at one time claimed about four millions, is now with enforced inactivity probably not much over one million.

The Congress claims to be non-communal, opening its doors to all religions and creeds, and there is a dim righteous sense in its ruling that no member of a communal organization can also be a member of a Congress Committee. This excludes members of the Moslem League from active participation, though apparently not from ordinary membership. I am doubtful if a member of the Hindu Mahasabha would be excluded from a Congress Committee.

Further rules cover every aspect of a constitution; and special sessions, finance and funds, procedure, tribunals to settle disputes and such matters are all remembered.

A study of the constitution reveals the characteristic of central control at every turn. While *de jure* the Working Committee is an executive authority responsible to the All-India Congress Committee,

<sup>1</sup> *President*:—Maulana A. K. Azad. *Members*:—Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, Sardar Vallabhai Patel, Dr. Khan, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Pandit G. B. Pant, J. B. Kripalani, Dr. P. C. Ghosh, Mr. Asaf Ali, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Dr. Syed Mahmud, Shankar Rao Deo, Mr. P. Sitaramayya, Narendra Deo, Hari Kishen Mehtab, and Jairamdas Daulatram.

*de facto* it both frames and executes legislation and its power was in no way more forcibly illustrated than when, at its behest, the Congress Governments in the Provinces without a protest abandoned office late in 1939. That many Ministers left their desks with the greatest reluctance is only the more convincing proof of their subservience to the central control.

The All-India National Congress was founded in the year 1885 by an Englishman, Mr. Alan Hume. Another Englishman, Sir William Wedderburn, was its fourth President in 1888, and Englishmen were again Presidents in 1904 and 1910. In those early days its objects were social rather than political and it aimed at the fusion of discordant elements and a moral regeneration in India.

The history of any political party is that of the rhythm of strain and cohesion in constant cycle. In slack times aggressive elements exert pressure on their leaders and set a faster pace than the majority, while in a common danger fissiparous portions unite. In 1907 the first drift to the left occurred and forced the leaders into a declaration of policy. *Accordingly the aim of those who maintained the ship on an even keel* was defined in the following innocuous terms of progress:—

“The attainment of a system of Government similar to that enjoyed by the self-governing members of the British Empire and a participation by them in the rights and responsibilities of the Empire on equal terms with those members. These objects are to be achieved by constitutional means, by fostering public spirit and developing and organizing the intellectual, moral, economic and industrial resources of the country.”

Could anyone quarrel with such a resolution?

In 1916 the separating elements managed to come together for a short time, when the Congress concluded “the Lucknow Pact” with the Moslem League and recognized the principle of separate electorates. But the union was only superficial and a drift continued which received impetus from the leadership of Mr. Gandhi who had returned to India in 1914 after an unsuccessful attempt to raise a Field Ambulance in England for the war.

Complete Independence was not demanded until 1927 and although in 1929 Dominion status was for a brief period recognized as a necessary stepping-stone, yet in 1930 the goal was again Independence and it has remained so ever since.

At the period of the three sessions of the Round Table Conference from 1930 to 1932 there were confused negotiations as to whether the Congress would send its representatives to England. Eventually only Mr. Gandhi attended at the second session. The subsequent Government White Paper setting out their conclusions for the future government of India was rejected by the Congress in October 1934 who then declared that:—

“The only satisfactory alternative is a Constitution drawn up by a Constituent Assembly elected on the basis of adult suffrage or as



near it as possible, with the power if necessary to the important minorities to have their representatives elected by the electors belonging to such minorities."<sup>1</sup>

A Constituent Assembly has ever since been the main feature of the Congress contribution to the future constitution.

Modern Congress history may conveniently be taken as opening with its attitude to the Government of India Act, 1935, when policy crystallized as one of acceptance of office in the Provinces with the object to destroy; while the Federal portion of the Act was completely rejected. For a time the issue of provincial office acceptance was shelved. The Congress contested the elections and were successful in seven of the eleven Provinces. Having elaborated a progressive programme of social reform, prospective Ministers were naturally anxious to put their promises into practice, but they were opposed by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. According to his view, Congress could enter the Legislatures to combat the Act; but the actual acceptance of ministerial office would constitute too obvious an intention of co-operation with British Imperialism. There followed much discussion as to the hypothetical uses of the power of Governors in Provinces to override their ministries. Nevertheless, after much rather profitless airing of opinion, the eventual sanction for office acceptance was accorded and ministers took up their new responsibilities with a vigour and application which gave their Secretariats a full working day.

In exactly what manner the Working Committee visualized the Constitution being wrecked from within it is impossible to say, and probably they themselves had no very definite plan of campaign. But events hardly followed the expected course of upheaval, and Provincial Governments settled down to conscientious administration on realistic and progressive lines. Had they then chosen to cut loose from the Central domination and form Coalition Governments with the Moslem League, the subsequent political history of India would have been very different. Late in 1944 I had a conversation with an old friend, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur.<sup>2</sup> For several years she had worked as an unofficial secretary to Mr. Gandhi, until her arrest in August 1942. I questioned her then as to the reason for the rigid exclusion of the Moslem League from all deliberations of Provincial Congress Governments and she in turn quoted Nehru's reply to her own query on this very question: "How could we possibly let down those Moslems who had stood by us by taking in as colleagues others who had worked against us? We should indeed have been unworthy of the loyalty of our friends." These words, she told me, mirrored the background to the inhospitable attitude of Congress to the great rival organization.

Allowing for such human weakness, it is a thousand pities that the policy of the higher command at this time was far more analogous to the concurrent Nazi regime in Europe than to any form of democracy. Separate party representation was not only not to be tolerated, it was not even to be recognized. The whole Congress political philosophy was

<sup>1</sup> See *Report on the Constitutional Problem in India*, Part II, Chapter II. Prof. R. Coupland.

<sup>2</sup> See also Chapter III, pages 38, 39.

one of totalitarian control in which all forms of opposition were to be absorbed into the one national machine. It is a sad reflection that to-day, six or seven years after these events, exactly those same symptoms of arrogant monopoly are still evident in the less aggressive formulation of policy which is permitted to them under the present circumstances. At a meeting in Delhi on 29th October 1944 one hundred Congress workers formed an Association to carry on the traditional programme, deciding to exclude immediately all those who had political affinities to any other parties save their own. Consequently Communists in the meeting immediately walked out. On the same day, in Madras, Mr. C. Rajagopalacharia, in addressing students, drew attention to this exclusive policy in terms which would have exactly fitted the situation in 1938 :—<sup>1</sup>

"I do not welcome the tendency in the Congress circles to exclude from the national organization those who follow or desire to examine a different policy from the one on which for the time being the seal of approbation was placed at the last session. . . . A tendency has started to narrow instead of widening the Congress communion. If this suicidal policy is pursued, it will enable our enemies to level against us charges of totalitarianism and partisanship with better justification than at present."

But to return to past history, at least there was no apparent plan to destroy the structure of Government from within, which, though difficult of practical achievement, might in the mere attempt have brought administration to a standstill.

In their attitude to the Federal portion of the Act of 1935 the Congress was chiefly influenced by the proposed nature of the representation of the Indian States. Representatives were to be the nominees of the Princes themselves and not the elected representatives of the State subjects. It is difficult to see how at the time any other arrangements could have been incorporated without entirely altering the status of the Princes and challenging their whole relationship with the Paramount Power. No such drastic steps were then contemplated, though it is clear that with the march of time changes will have to come if a complete Indian Union is ever to be achieved.

To Nehru the present conception of the position of State subjects is one of enslavement, and a Federation could only be accepted which purported to lighten that position. It is true that in some States the interests of the people are deplorably neglected; but the saner approach would have been to have tolerated the Federal proposals with a view to contacting and influencing State representatives. The mere fact that, for the first time in Indian history, the nominees of State Rulers and the elected representatives of the people of British India were to meet in the same forum would have constituted a progressive step of the greatest

<sup>1</sup> My attention was more recently drawn to an alleged statement of Mrs. Naidu which, if true, might justify a happier view being taken for the future. In February 1945 she is reported as having said: "Never can Congress hope to indulge in power politics or come to power ignoring other parties."

significance ; a step which could have been wisely exploited for the further unification of India and the betterment of State subjects.

Another formidable obstacle to Congress ambitions lay in the fact that the combined forces of opposition in the Federal Assembly could easily outvote the Congress representation, assuming that the latter would carry all the General Constituencies.<sup>1</sup> Even a combination of State nominees and the Moslem League (assuming that the League would capture the Moslem seats) would be sufficient to form a majority. This represented a situation far from the position of domination which the Congress would alone tolerate as satisfying their ambitions.

While the higher command were intent on centralizing and retaining power within their own party machine, they threw aside all alternative proposals which aimed at the unification of India. Moreover the consolidation of their central control was taking place just at a time when the new Act was offering the Provinces complete autonomy. In these circumstances Provincial Cabinets experienced opposing pulls on their policies; and it is to their credit that they managed during their brief period of office both to carry on constitutional government and satisfy their high command. Throughout this period the latter lived in constant fear that their lieutenants would be won over to a "narrow provincialism" and it was therefore to their great relief that they successfully recalled Provincial Ministries to the fold, late in 1939.

Not only were Ministries subject to the constant scrutiny of the Working Committee but they were also highly embarrassed by the enthusiasm of their own community out in the country-side, who, in many areas, attempted to establish parallel government alongside the All-India and Provincial Services, threatening to set up their own courts and generally hindering rather than assisting their own Ministers in the daily administration. The astonishing element in such a situation is that in these circumstances efficient government was able to function at all.

Apart from matters of opinion, the only criticism which might justifiably be levelled at the Provincial Ministries was that they were obviously inclined to be carried away in their first enthusiasm. As an example, an attempt to make good a loss of well over a million pounds in the budget in Bombay, as the price of prohibition, by levying an urban immovable property tax, stifled the development of the city and was headstrong legislation born of inexperience.

We pass to the outbreak of war and the reactions to those momentous days of September 1939 on the minds of the men who controlled Congress destinies. Statements were not wanting which at first indicated Congress readiness to identify itself alongside Britain in the coming struggle. Thus Jawaharlal Nehru in September declared:—

"In a conflict between democracy and freedom on the one side and fascism on the other, our sympathies must inevitably lie on the side of democracy. . . . I should like India to play her full part and throw all her resources into the struggle for a new order."

<sup>1</sup> Constituencies other than those for special classes (Moslems, Sikhs, etc.).

Personally I have always accepted this as reflecting Nehru's most sincere and even passionate ambition. Fresh from a visit to China, with whose national aspirations he has always had the closest sympathy, Nehru must have cherished the conception that India too might emulate the role of China in her search for nationhood. China was not to be pitied for the rape of her country by a barbarian; rather was she to be envied for the opportunity to defend her freedom and find her greatness in the process: and yet, after many years of struggle, to the man in the street it would seem that China still must travel far before she realizes the ideal of unity.

Previously, in 1938, Nehru had visited Prague where he had unceremoniously refused to meet Hitler, thereby bringing down the full invective of Dr. Goebbels. Indeed if the anti-fascist sentiments of one man could have gauged the Congress temper, it is difficult to see how co-operation in the display of a common front could have been avoided. Unfortunately Nehru's wishful thinking about British Imperialism seemed as strong as his hatred of Nazism; while the sentiments of his followers on the international danger were so confused that they could never separate the international issue from that of the local question of India's freedom and their own political power.

Nevertheless, opinion was not unfavourable to a national participation in a united war effort. What then were the strong currents which swept the Congress ship into lonely horizonless seas? The core of the trouble was essentially a matter only of wounded pride. Underlying the shape of actual events was the sense that the great Indian National Congress, the voice of India, had been ignored in committing the country to war.

Constitutionally it was of course a fact that, whereas in the Dominions war was declared on the advice of Ministers responsible to their Parliaments, in India a state of war was declared by the Viceroy. Under the existing Constitution it could not have been otherwise. The dispatch of troops from India to certain stations overseas previous to the declaration of war was seized on as an intention not to take the people—identified always by Congress with their own leadership—into the confidence of Government. The fact that to give publicity to such moves was to endanger the lives of the troops was conveniently ignored. In actual fact the party leaders in the Central Assembly, including Mr. Bhulabhai Desai the Congress leader, were confidentially informed of the intention to send troops abroad previous to their dispatch. There was ample opportunity for all parties to express disapproval of India's participation, yet with the sole exception of the Congress sentiment was everywhere for a total war effort, and the Defence of India Bill, apart from opposition from Congress Nationalists, obtained a quick and smooth passage through the Legislative Assembly and the Council of State. I re-emphasize that opposition was not to the declaration of war but to the fact of non-consultation.

The Defence of India Act and other measures which had to be taken in order to concentrate certain essential powers in the hands of the Central Government were now opposed on grounds of over-centralized

domination by the same men who previously had viewed the devolution of power to the Provinces as a narrow parochialism, calculated to hinder the growth of national sentiment.

From a sense of frustration and drift there soon emerged the idea of a bargain. It may have been that with their provincial colleagues busy over a period of two years, while they themselves were out of work, the high command were ready to grasp at any form of political development which at least betokened activity. This, with frustration, may have determined the petty approach to a war policy, or rather the lack of a policy, which became evident as time went on.

In September 1939 the British Government were asked to define their war aims in regard to democracy and imperialism in their application to India. A pertinent reply would have been that our only war aim was to win the war.

Later, in October, a further resolution stated that "India must be declared an independent nation and present application must be given to this status to the largest possible extent."

Meanwhile the Viceroy was untiring in his efforts to bring not only the Congress but all political elements within the ambit of a united war prosecution, qualified always with the provision that drastic constitutional change could not take place during the war. But all efforts at appeasement failed. The announcement of the War Advisory Council and the reiteration of post-war Dominion Status for India were regarded as quite inadequate, and on the 22nd October the Working Committee concluded their resolution with these words:—

"In the circumstances, it cannot possibly give any support to Great Britain, for it would amount to the endorsement of the imperialist policy which the Congress has sought to end. As a first step in this direction, the Committee calls upon the Congress Ministries to tender their resignations."

By the middle of November all Congress Ministries had resigned and the Congress entered on a period which to many must seem as barren, undetermined and futile as any phase in its history. They sought comfort in their ridiculous isolation by monotonous repetition of incredible resolutions with reference to Britain's imperialistic aims. Thus in March 1940, at Ramgarh, the following fantastic declaration was passed at the annual session:—

"Great Britain is carrying on the war fundamentally for imperialistic ends and for the preservation and strengthening of her Empire, which is based on the exploitation of the people of India, as well as of other Asiatic and African countries."

Another cheerful resolution compared British-Indian relations to those of Germany and Czechoslovakia. Such utterly childish expressions of opinion were nevertheless the kind of comment for which men who were looking for trouble were waiting.

In July 1940 appeared what was termed an "offer," but which in fact was nothing more or less than an attempt to drive a hard bargain. The demand now was for an immediate declaration of complete independence which was to take effect through a provisional National Government at the centre, so constituted as "to command the confidence of all the elected elements in the central Legislature and secure the closest co-operation of responsible Governments in the Provinces." These measures would "enable the Congress to throw its full weight into efforts for the effective organization of the defence of the country." In brief, such proposals involved a major constitutional change at the Centre and the return of Congress Ministries in the Provinces. In return Government was promised co-operation in effective defence, a term which, in view of the nebulous ideas on waging war connected with non-violence, was open to wide interpretation.

To change the whole basis of government in the middle of the war had already been declared impossible. The decision merely conformed to a simple principle that no wise man swaps horses in mid-stream. It is true that the Americans held an election in November 1944 and that in England, also, we did not wait for the defeat of the Japanese. Elections may perhaps be suffered during a war, though personally a soldier finds it difficult to appreciate their necessity. But structural changes in the whole machinery of government represent far too great a diversion of attention from the immediate issues of war and could not be countenanced by any sane government.

Throughout the remaining months of 1940 and on into 1941 there was sullen and sterile hostility. In the announcement of the Atlantic Charter Congress nationalists found opportunity for an alleged slight to national aspirations. Article 3 of the Charter states that among the principles for a better future is "respect for the right of all peoples to choose the form of Government under which they live." The promises for India have been far more precise and have gone beyond this broad statement. Nevertheless, the fact that India was not specifically mentioned troubled those who were looking for trouble.

Meanwhile in August 1940 the Government of India went ahead with further measures to identify the willing elements of the country with the war effort. The Viceroy's Council was expanded to include representative Indians and to a certain degree the Cripps proposals were foreshadowed, in that, immediately after the war, a body representative of the principal elements in the national life was to be set up to frame a new constitution. Discussions to this end were to continue during the war.

The Congress response to this was a complete rejection with authority to Mr. Gandhi to launch a movement of "non-violent resistance." Mr. Gandhi accordingly set about a programme which, from his point of view, was academically correct. The theory was that the self-control demanded by non-violence should first be tested by selective practical application.

Certain suitable representatives were therefore called upon to court arrest by going through a self-denying process of being naughty boys and committing some act which would ensure their apprehension. The immediate object seems to have been to assert the right of freedom of expression. Starting with the leaders, Mr. Rajagalopacharia, Pandit Nehru and Maulana Azad, the lists of satyagrahis were increased by successive stages until some six hundred devotees had done their duty by January 1941. In April the privilege was extended to ordinary members and the numbers rose rapidly. But in the meanwhile some of the first enthusiasts had been released and had not offered themselves for re-arrest, an omission which was regarded as indicating a general weakening of enthusiasm. By November the Satyagraha campaign was well on the wane and in December the leaders were released, a gesture which had no apparent effect on the Congress high command. There followed a few months of complete isolation during which the Congress rallied their scattered forces and something akin to the previous policy of parallel government was attempted, the very full measure of co-operation which other elements in the country were displaying being completely ignored.

Meanwhile, in December 1941, Pearl Harbour was attacked and the Japanese menace was a reality. In plain language, Congress had the jitters and there was now confusion over the non-violent principle. Mr. Rajagalopacharia, who was preaching a gospel of armament, in particular disagreed with the innate pacifism of Mr. Gandhi; and he appeared ready to avail himself of a reasonable gesture, should it be forthcoming from the Government. Pandit Nehru's attitude was, as always, governed by his obsession concerning Britain's imperialism at the expense of his undoubted sense of India's duty to combat the Axis. If fighting Nazism meant co-operation with imperialism then apparently the possible victory of the former was a more acceptable alternative than assistance to the latter. It was a curious mental confusion of mixed rivalries in hatred, a state of indecision which one dislikes to associate with a highly cultured mind of breadth and variety; for if ethics mean anything at all one can see no permanent value in any settlement born of bitterness and hate.

Meanwhile party leaders had not moved one inch towards meeting each other to effect agreement; and there was a fundamental deadlock far deeper than that which the Indian Press later proclaimed to exist as a result of the continued detention of Congress leaders. It was in these circumstances that the intention to send Sir Stafford Cripps to India with fresh and final proposals was announced.

He accordingly arrived in March 1942, and for three weeks the political temperature in Delhi ran high. The detailed proposals are discussed elsewhere in this book and here we are only concerned with the Congress reactions. I can remember well the excitement of those days which penetrated even the conservative circle of an officers' mess. We were preoccupied in training men who had ridden horses all their lives to drive tanks; nevertheless, the proposals seemed sufficiently drastic to shock many of us who admittedly had only thought of India as offering

a certain standard and type of life in the days of peace; a life which spelt security, sport and good fellowship.

On the 10th April 1942 the final rejection of the proposals by the Working Committee was received by Sir Stafford Cripps, constituting a refusal of the most concrete and comprehensive plan for India's future which the British Government had yet produced.

We may reiterate the two main points in the Congress demands; demands which had certainly been consistent with a fixed political ideology over many years. These were an immediate declaration of independence and the setting up of a Constituent Assembly based on adult suffrage. Although these two demands were not reconcilable with the terms of the proposals, yet it was hardly due to their consideration that negotiations failed. The most prominent point of contention did not arise until three weeks after the opening of the discussions. It was a demand from the Congress for a Cabinet with full power in which their own representatives would of course constitute a majority. In effect, this would have meant a major constitutional change introduced by convention and the setting up of a cabinet responsible to no electorate in which the Congress would have had a permanent and irremovable majority. That this demand was of course in harmony with previous Congress policy did not alter the fact that as a concrete proposal it was produced for the first time after three weeks of negotiation, and it surely indicates the mental state of indecision in which the Working Committee were now entangled. A confusion of war and peace aims and an overdose of the rival claims of the Indian political drama and an international struggle of ideals were hardly the ingredients for clear thinking. The Congress demand would of course never have been accepted by the Moslem League and it was typical of their attitude of intolerance to all opinions save their own.

There were other sources of disapproval. The old question of the representation of the States, the Defence portfolio and the suggestion of the recognition of the principle of division had been subject to suspicious examination. But the proposed structural metamorphosis was one which no sane Government could have accepted, even had there been a patched-up settlement of other matters.

In a short account of the negotiations by T. A. Raman, an opinion is expressed which, though not very generous, offers a reason for the fundamental breakdown, which is probably at least near the truth.<sup>1</sup> In the interim Council which would have taken office Congress representatives chosen by themselves and not by the Viceroy would have sat in consultation with the representatives of other parties. Being in close daily contact with the war prosecution in its colossal scope and with its heavy responsibilities, these men would have wielded real power; and their opinion would have carried great influence with their colleagues had they chosen to order their deliberations with tact and the will to win the war. But the assumption of real power at the centre would have connoted an inevitable loss of power and prestige with the party. When

<sup>1</sup> *India*. Chapter VII. By T. A. Raman. (1942);



the Congress come to power, they wish to sweep in on the crest of a popular wave with all the trumpeting and paraphernalia of an election. Instead, they were offered hard drab responsibility without the applause of an electorate; responsibility which moreover would entail the sponsoring of unpopular legislation of Ordinances and Government controls, possibly even of the enforcement of "scorched earth." This was a very different conception of the path to power, and in the event the mental courage required to tread it was not forthcoming.

Two years before these events I had listened to Sir Stafford Cripps deliver an address in general terms on socialism in Bombay. Beside him on the platform were Pandit Nehru and Mr. Bhulabhai Desai. The thought had then passed through my mind that if we were to hand over a working governmental machine to representative Indians, then Cripps would be the man to put the finishing touch to negotiations. It was a sad business to read of his departure empty-handed, for somehow was the feeling that a best and last chance went with him.

On the 29th April the All-Indian Congress Committee met at Allahabad when the Congress attitude to the proposals was confirmed. Two or three quotations will indicate the hopeless sterility into which they had now sunk :—

"If India were free, she would have determined her own policy and might have kept out of the war, though her sympathies would in any event have been with the victims of aggression. . . . Not only the interests of India, but also Britain's safety and world peace and freedom, demand that Britain must abandon her hold on India. . . . In case an invasion takes place it must be resisted. Such resistance can only take the form of non-violent non-co-operation as the British Government has prevented the organization of national defence by the people in any other way."

It is hardly credible that these are the words of sane and serious men who aspire to the leadership of a great Continent in a modern world. The voice of Mr. Gandhi in his vaguer moments is heard behind such nebulous meandering. We know now that Pandit Nehru took a more realistic view and that Mr. Rajagopalacharia was in open conflict with this political isolation. He at least saw that, to obtain the transfer of power, an agreement with the Moslem League was first essential, and in July he resigned from the Congress.

Mr. Gandhi, who had left Delhi in the middle of the negotiations, had by now returned to take an active part in moulding, and perhaps muddling, Congress affairs. From him there presently emerged the conception that the British had but to leave India and the Japanese would abandon their intention to invade India's shores. On the 24th May he made the following incredibly irresponsible pronouncement :—

"Leave India in God's hands, in modern parlance to anarchy, and that anarchy may lead to internecine warfare for a time or to unrestrained dacoities. From these a true India will rise in place of the false one we see."

If the millions of India should ever experience this hope translated into cruel reality, one wonders what their verdict will be. As will be shown later, I too admit that much tribulation will be the price of independence and that the price must be paid. But payment by instalment in times of peace is a very different matter to payment in full with the Japanese at the gates of India.

From this approach, in June Mr. Gandhi slightly modified his theories and he now conceded that British and Allied troops should remain in India for the protection of her soil, but under treaty arrangements with a National Government. The Working Committee gave expression to these views at Wardha in July. In explaining how the transfer of power from Britain to India was to be effected, they said:—

“On the withdrawal of British rule in India, responsible men and women will come together to form a provisional Government, representative of all important sections of the people of India, which will later evolve a scheme by which a Constituent Assembly can be convened in order to prepare a constitution for the Government of India.”

To me it is pertinent to ask that, if the men and women of India will come together after British withdrawal, what in the name of all common sense is to prevent them from doing so before? For that in a sentence is all we are waiting for. It needs little intelligence to trace the poverty of statesmanship behind this proposal. No “provisional” Government which was also fully “representative” would commit itself to a policy of “Quit India” since in doing so it would immediately lose the support of all other elements represented and would cease to be “representative.”

Finally the resolution closed with a threat. Should the appeal fail, the Congress would be reluctantly compelled to utilize all its non-violent strength in a widespread struggle under the inevitable leadership of Mr. Gandhi. The issue was to be confirmed at a full meeting of the All-India Congress Committee on the 7th August in Bombay.

Throughout this period Congress were alone in a barren land of their own discovery. The Liberals, the Moslem League and the Communists, to quote but three minority parties, repudiated their iconoclasm. The Government stayed their hands in the hope that at the last moment the resolution might be defeated. But it was passed almost unanimously and on the 8th August the arrests took place and a chapter of Congress history was closed.

It is not for me, who have only the Press and the Government and private pamphlets to read, to pass judgment on the responsibility of Congress for the ensuing disturbances. I can only state the conclusions from the available published evidence. From this it seems that, while there was no direct campaign planned in the manner that a General Staff would direct a military operation, there were instead many irre-

sponsible and dangerous speeches from the leaders, which, for the pliable student community to whom they were mainly addressed, could only have acted as plain incentives to violence. Indeed, with an administrative plan, it might have been a simpler task to check subsequent riots and disorder. But there was apparently little studied co-ordination in the attack and young nationalists were therefore left to put their own interpretation on such advice as "do or die." Is it surprising that they took these statements to mean just exactly what they said?

The Government Report on the matter quotes only a few of many possible examples, and in turn I select but two of these to indicate the nature of the counsel which was being proffered under the accommodating ideology of non-violence.

Mr. Shankar Rao Deo:<sup>1</sup> "Some students ask us whether they have to leave school and colleges during the struggle. My answer is that they will have to do it if ordered by Gandhiji. Students have always wanted revolution. Here is their opportunity."

Mr. Gandhi:<sup>2</sup> "There is no room left in the proposal for withdrawal or negotiation. There is no question of one more chance. After all, it is open rebellion."

In a letter written from jail on the 13th February 1943 to the Viceroy, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad denied all knowledge of a formal campaign of sabotage, stating that no instructions, either secret or otherwise, were ever issued to this end.<sup>3</sup>

We should accept this as true. But the core of the matter is that Government were not concerned so much with motives and a legal analysis of non-violence as with results; and there can be no question of the fact that the disorders of August and September 1942, seriously endangering the maintenance and supply of the Army on the Eastern Frontier, were the result of statements issued by the Congress high command without any clear attempt to analyse their subsequent effect. The fact that, after the voice of the Congress was hushed, for two and a half years there was no hint of a recurrence of these melancholy events should speak for itself. This is not to put the stamp of approval on the extremely unsatisfactory situation of that period. It did however indicate that if the Working Committee on release were to show no change of policy, then their continued detention for the duration of the war would seem a regrettable but essential measure of the war prosecution.

In retrospect it is clear that, even had we won Congress lip service to war co-operation, there could never have been a practical application of real assistance. One cannot wage war by halves and with the leading

<sup>1</sup> At the Bombay Session, 4th August, 1942.

<sup>2</sup> At a Press Conference at Wardha, referring to the Working Committee's resolution of the 14th July, 1942.

<sup>3</sup> This letter was apparently not released until the 1st November, 1944, when it was published by Dr. Syed Mahmud, a released member of the Working Committee.

player on the Congress side preaching unadulterated pacifism, there would always have been ambiguity and qualification to their enthusiasm. Moreover the army of millions which they envisaged would have been a political army with its mind as much on the constitutional position in India as on the enemy.

If it be admitted that the British have some experience of soldiering and war, then it must further be assumed that the men with whom we have filled the ranks of the Indian Army are the best available to fight the enemy.<sup>1</sup> These are the men whom we appreciate and understand as fighters, and psychologically it would have been extremely difficult, if not impossible, for British and Indian officers to have led young nationalists successfully in the field. There would inevitably have grown up an impossible tendency to "parallel" armies, just as there had been a tendency to parallel Government.

For a long time five members of the Working Committee were free, their release having been ordered on medical grounds, while the remaining members were kept in detention until the British Government announcement of the 14th June 1945. Looking back on this interlude which came to be spoken of as the "deadlock," it seems now to have served an inevitable purpose. It rid the whole political arena of ambiguity and in a situation at least of clear definition Government were free to organize resistance to the Japanese and lay the firm foundations for India's full participation in victory in the Far East. Secondly, it gave everyone time for reflection and expression of opinion, affording valuable data for all those who were sincerely studying the Indian problem. As I write, it is the effect of this opportunity for reflection among the members of Congress which would seem to mark the most critical of all moments in Indian political history.<sup>2</sup> There is every indication that these men have found a new wisdom and that Nehru in particular is not embittered to the point of the destruction of balanced judgment. A very generous interpretation should be placed on any symptoms of accommodation, for where pride may preclude an open declaration of a change of policy the influence of increasing moderation and latent common sense may well guide the future action of the Working Committee, even though we may receive no open statement of changed intentions. Much will depend on the personal advice of Mr. Gandhi.

In the Punjab where I spent the greater period of my time in India, the appeal of the Congress is hardly experienced and my most personal contact with the organization was years ago when a squadron of my Regiment was called on to keep the peace on an afternoon in Meerut City. On that occasion a large brick which grazed my head served as an introduction.

<sup>1</sup> For the further development of this argument, see Chapter IX.

<sup>2</sup> The recent return of a Congress Ministry in the North-West Frontier Province has been taken by some to indicate a general acceptance of a new policy of war prosecution by the whole Congress organization. In this particular case, with over 100,000 men from the Province in the forces, it would certainly be unreal for the Provincial Government not to give its full support and sympathy to so large and important an element in the population of the Province.

I have listened to debates in the Central and Provincial Assemblies in which Congressmen have participated and it has been clear that there was seldom any intention to discuss a problem on its merits. Sooner or later a rambling commentary would develop into an issue concerning India's freedom, though the point under discussion might be ticketless travel on the railways. This kind of obstruction impresses no one.

The Congress hold is most firm in the United Provinces, Bihar and the Bombay Presidency. For years there was a tendency to confine its activities to the towns and in the heart of the country, even in the above areas, there are few khaddar caps or Congress flags. It is largely due to the personal effort of Mr. Gandhi and his attention to the social side of his programme that their influence has now spread to the country-side, and the annual session, which was formerly always held in an industrial centre, is now staged in a rural setting.

In their social activities for the betterment of the people there is so much that is both noble and worthy; and it is a thousand pities that in the political field there should be such estrangement.<sup>1</sup> Solid social work, unqualified by political dogma, has in the past been the meeting-point for the best which either Britain or India could give. In particular much of the movement to encourage the country's rural indigenous crafts will receive the greatest sympathy from Englishmen. We should indeed hope that when Mr. Gandhi is no longer with us the inspiration for selfless social work will be passed to his successors; for it seems that only in such a manner lies the hope of a mutual appreciation being re-established between the India of the Congress and an England which, whether it likes it or not, may have to linger on in dwindling unobtrusive guidance.

Finally, it has been said that Congress leaders feel that once the prize of freedom is won their task is done; that it will then be for any political party of the day to take charge and capture the democratic direction of the country. I feel that this is hardly a happy policy. To me it savours suspiciously of that avoidance of responsibility of which there were indications in April 1942. Let the Indian National Congress, when it is again free to frame its future plans, by all means devise a programme of social progression which will not only bring it to power but keep it there. In the future direction of India we will not mind who takes the credit so long as Government passes to men of integrity, patriotism and wisdom. In other words, when final power passes, let the best men win.

<sup>1</sup> Since these words were written, the Viceroy's Conference to discuss proposed interim changes in the Government has assembled at Simla (June 1945). It has been possible to include a reference to these issues in a later chapter. Here it is only right to record that on the evidence we receive in England the Congress leaders appear to be bringing a fresh tolerance and understanding to the Conference table, which all men with India's interests at heart will welcome. Jawaharlal Nehru has now met Lord Wavell and it is legitimate to hope that the contact of so sensitive and courageous a personality with another, steady and rich in its experience of men and their aspirations, may close the era of Congress-British antipathy with the release of the remaining eight members of the Working Committee. It is logical to suppose that with the repeal of Section 93 Government in the Provinces will follow, Congress Provincial Governments accepting a new lead from their central control.

## CHAPTER II

### GANDHI—THE MAN

I DO NOT THINK I HAD EVER HEARD OF MR. GANDHI BEFORE LANDING IN India in April 1919. But I must certainly have registered his name very soon after arrival, for there was trouble brewing in the Punjab where I was bound for, and my recollection is that the Frontier Mail was consequently twelve hours late.

It might be considered an impertinence to record a verdict on someone whom one has never met. Yet having seen the name of a man almost daily in the morning paper over a period of about twenty-four years, it would be a dull brain which could not make some kind of useful assessment of his place in Indian and international affairs. I have felt too that the story of Gandhi and his teaching, while being closely identified with the story of the Indian National Congress, is yet far from an indivisible coherence with the latter. Since many years Mr. Gandhi has been successful in persuading the Congress to adopt the creed of non-violence as the basis of its ideology. But it is very doubtful if his teaching will live on to guide the Congress of the future, once the spell of his own personality is removed.

While the Congress and Mr. Gandhi are inseparably identified in the goal of an independent free India, in matters of political and economic philosophy there is not necessarily any unanimity, and it will be shown that the kind of India which Gandhi visualizes as the Utopian fulfilment of Swaraj is by no means the India which the Congress have in view as assuming its place in the communion of international relations.

To a marked degree, the story of Mr. Gandhi explains his fervent and exemplary patriotism; and a brief sketch of his life will therefore not be out of place.

The Gandhian literature is overwhelming. Besides the books of Robert Bernays and the late C. F. Andrews there are innumerable pamphlets and sketches. More recently there have been added works by Louis Fischer and D. F. Karaka.<sup>1</sup> The latter's contribution is in free-flowing style which brings biography dangerously near to the atmosphere of fiction. Underlying much of this very readable book are attacks on British motives and methods which I consider are distastefully unjust; and there is a heavy sentimentality which, for me, clouds the issue. Men always write with the obsession of Gandhi rather than Gandhism. Yet it is the latter which is ultimately of importance to India. Nevertheless Karaka's work is human and we can take his shafts.

<sup>1</sup> *A Week with Gandhi*. L. Fischer. *Out of Dust*. D. F. Karaka. The author will be remembered as a past President of the Oxford Union. He is now a prominent Bombay journalist whose novels have a wide circulation in India.

The most comprehensive Gandhian literature is probably his own autobiography.<sup>1</sup> The comments of contemporary observers are still confined either to pæans of personal sentiment or angry exasperation at the confused application of a non-violent philosophy to a violent world.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born on the 2nd October 1869 in Porbandar State on the Kathiawar western coast, where his father held the post of Dewan. The family are of solid Vaisyan stock, their background being that of rigid Hindu orthodoxy with its impositions of child marriage, of vegetarianism and of inherent suspicion of western influence and western travel.

It must have been a courageous decision which took the young Gandhi to England to study law, for it was obviously in opposition to the prejudices of his society. Yet he was determined to qualify as a barrister and we read that his father having died shortly before his departure his mother's consent was finally obtained after vows to abstain from meat and drink and to remain celibate. At this stage we picture a rather shy industrious young man anxious, if anything, to fall into line with the western method of life. There seem to have been no early symptoms of a set purpose, but if, as we are to believe, he was successful in honouring the vows he had undertaken, then it is certainly right to assume that there was mental toughness above the average.

Back in India, there was a brief period of restless and unprofitable private practice. In those days, Britain was in undisputed control of every aspect of Indian life and it is probable that, on a sensitive nature, the domination of the white man, and the apparent acceptance of that domination by Indians, produced a sense of humiliation which sought escape. An invitation to fight a case for an Indian firm in South Africa therefore received a ready acceptance.

It is not the intention here to examine the position of Indians in South Africa. The problem is one for whole-time study; and future developments may well affect the attitude of the post-war India to the British family of nations. As I understand it, to-day it is not so much a question of colour prejudice as an insistence on the part of South Africans on a standard and mode of life in harmony with that of their own. But undoubtedly there has been a severe system of exclusion of Indians from the public and political life of the country; and if this is true of modern times, then far more so in the 'nineties the treatment of Indians bore the stamp of human slavery. From many experiences of personal humiliation and from his own keen observation was born to Gandhi that sense of a mission in life to lead his people to a realization of the pride of nationhood.

Much as Gandhi was conscious of the servility of Indians in South Africa, this did not prevent him from throwing in his lot with the British in the South African War, when, rallying the Indian community, he successfully raised and led an Indian Field Ambulance. Whatever his quarrel with British authority may have been, he had a ready appre-

<sup>1</sup> *My Experiments in Truth*. M. K. Gandhi.



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POLITICAL. INDIA.

Mahadev Desai

Mahatma Gandhi

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru





*[Photograph by the Hon. Mrs. Birdwood]*

"Mute India"—The Dhobi.

ciation of the British character and of the ideals which he believed the British Empire was destined to give to a leaderless world. It is my conviction that in spite of the turmoil of the intervening years he still accepts that character and looks to Britain as a potential leader in international morality.

In South Africa Gandhi had gradually established himself as the leader of his community, the seal of his work being his stand taken against the Transvaal Act for the registration of Indians. It was then that for the first time there emerged the technique of Satyagraha. Indeed much of this period bears a similarity on a confined scale to subsequent events in India and we may regard these years as a time of experiment for the greater events to come.

In 1914, in answer to a call from that great Indian leader Gokhale, Gandhi sailed for England, but in the meanwhile war broke out. Once again, his object was to raise a Field Ambulance, but ill-health intervened and he returned to India, a comparatively obscure barrister with a reputation for having stirred up trouble in South Africa and putting Indian affairs in that country on the map. Back in India, he was content to remain aloof for some considerable time, and we read that at a conference of leaders he seconded a resolution in Delhi in 1918 declaring India's loyalty to the King-Emperor.

It was in 1919 that he began to hold the stage in All-India politics. In that year Government sought to retain certain powers which they had enjoyed during the war under the Defence of the Realm Act. The legislation which was to achieve this was known as the Rowlatt Act, and although the circumstances of its application would seldom if ever arise, the Act was chosen as the focus of the Congress attack, now under the established leadership of Mr. Gandhi. There followed the dreary tragic events of Amritsar, events which will always be told differently by the contending parties. The Government case is forcefully supported in the late Sir Michael O'Dwyer's book *India As I Knew It*,<sup>1</sup> while the literature setting out the Indian contention is legion. The effect of these events on Mr. Gandhi was to bring a sober reflection to bear on the teaching which he was now propagating to the masses. Non-violence was a weapon which could be used only under careful supervision and Gandhi was astute and generous enough at that time to admit it in a resolution passed with some surprise by the Congress in their session at Amritsar at the end of 1919.

Early in 1920 at the Congress Session in Calcutta a resolution was carried which for the first time embodied the complete equipment of the Gandhian technique, now so disturbingly familiar to the machinery of governmental law and order. "Progressive non-violent non-co-operation," which had been crystallizing as the new weapon ever since the days of the South African experiment, was specifically mentioned, with a detailed elaboration of its propagation with reference to Law Courts, Schools, Legislative Councils, the boycott of British goods, and many other aspects of national life. The actual case chosen for its application represented

<sup>1</sup> Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab at the time.

a tactical error on the part of Mr. Gandhi. At that time the religious feelings of Moslems were being played up on behalf of Turkey which was then having to accept the renunciation of her hold on Palestine as part of the penalty for throwing in her lot with Germany in the war. Seeing an opportunity to enlist Moslem sentiment under the common banner of Swaraj, Gandhi took it upon himself to champion the Moslem cause in an attack on the British Government, alleging the betrayal of Moslem interests and the disregard of pledges. He thereby went outside the sphere of domestic Indian affairs and sought a grievance for India in an international settlement, which of all the post-war settlements of that time proved the least disturbing to those who fought on the other side and of the greatest responsibility and embarrassment to Britain. His gesture however fell flat in that almost simultaneously Turkey herself repudiated the Khalif as either her temporal or spiritual ruler; and since it was on behalf of the Khalifat that Moslem sentiment had been exercised the attempt to exploit the Moslem situation for the purpose of political unity in India came to nothing.

In 1921 the Prince of Wales visited India and his tour was everywhere a focus for hostile Congress demonstrations. By now Mr. Gandhi's full programme was operating and the Congress ship was riding on the crest of a wave of exuberant and uncontrolled enthusiasm. The current was swift and joyous; but the course was unknown! Throughout the year and on into 1922 there was reckless irresponsible navigation, the peak being reached when the trial and sentence of Gandhi became inevitable in connection with the civil disobedience movement launched at Bardoli, a tehsil in the Surat District of the Bombay Presidency. The trial was unique for the extreme courtesy and higher deportment displayed by both the judge and the accused. Seldom can there have been such mutual solicitude shown in the history of litigation as was exchanged between Mr. Gandhi and Mr. Justice Broomfield. This is no comment of sophisticated derision. It is a frank recognition of the respect which two minds essentially in tune could display for each other in the unhappy circumstances which drove them into opposition. It is only right to remember any coincidence which recalls the gracious elements in continued antagonism; for though Bardoli was 23 years ago there are still men of good will on both sides who can bear with reminders of the usage of chivalry; while Mr. Gandhi for all his procrastination remains a clean fighter. In such reflection lies hope for the future.

Mr. Gandhi pleaded "guilty." In a long and powerful statement of his case, the theme of which was the emasculation of India under British rule, he summed up the justification for non-co-operation—of which civil disobedience is but an extension—in the words, "In my humble opinion, non-co-operation with evil is as much a duty as is co-operation with good." If he at that time was only able to see unmitigated evil in the British connection there is nothing more to be said! Thus non-co-operation became his inevitable course. The pity is that once committed to so drastic a remedy a leader is manoeuvred into a political position from which it is difficult ever to withdraw. The sentence was six years.

Meanwhile differences of opinion arose in Congress circles over the question of Council entry. Non-co-operation implied a complete boycott of the Council. Many Congress members did not accept this, and so under the leadership of the late Mr. C. R. Das and Pandit Motilal Nehru large sections of the Congress sought Council representation and assumed the label of "the Swaraj Party," the disciples of Mr. Gandhi being known as the "no-changers."

Gandhi had served but two years of his sentence when he was released and he immediately set about producing a "formula," a procedure of compromise in which from time to time he has shown himself to be expert in dealing with his own flock.

The year 1924 saw the outbreak of communal disturbances in many parts of the country, and in penance Gandhi decided on a 21-days fast. This was the first occasion on which he imposed on himself the rigours of prolonged hunger. The reactions of a westerner to fasting are inevitably very different to those of an Indian nationalist. In the past we levelled ridicule at the ladies of the suffragette movement and it was hardly likely that we would spare the Mahatma. The position is merely that the refusal to take food does not impress the detached western mind in the inevitable manner in which it appeals to the emotional and more personal approach of young India.

In the same year Gandhi was official President of the Indian National Congress for the only time in his long association with it. It was curious that in this year, which should have registered the peak of his power, there were signs that the philosophy of non-co-operation was not taking root in a manner which would have indicated an expanding acceptance of his leadership. The machinery of bureaucracy, whether imposed or not, was too firmly in the saddle and gradually there was a return to the use of the Government institutions of the day. Students came back to school, boycotts were abandoned and Council entry was sought. The normal administration, ordered and unimaginative, functioned again. In his presidential address Gandhi seemed as much concerned with social questions as with politics; and with his usual courage he made a startling attack on orthodox Hinduism in their exclusivism to the Harijans.<sup>1</sup> He has since never relaxed in his conviction that it is the paramount duty of Hindus to bring the outcaste community into the fold. In contrast, their own leader, Dr. Ambedkar, seeks to isolate the scheduled castes<sup>1</sup> completely, maintaining that their caste brethren are incapable of honouring any policy which Mr. Gandhi may wish to impose. Yet Dr. Ambedkar will surely admit that the voice of Gandhi has been the only authoritative one raised in protest at the heartless and almost inhuman attitude of strict orthodox Hinduism.

There followed three or four years of comparative inactivity, years during which time Gandhi was fully occupied with unostentatious visits round the country-side in establishing the new ideal and economy of the spinning-wheel; and it was not until 1930 that public interest was once

<sup>1</sup> Previously known as the "Untouchables." Always referred to by Gandhi as "Harijans." Now officially termed "scheduled castes." The meaning of "Harijans" is "God's People."

more focused on his movements. We need not dwell on the situation which led to his march to the village of Dandi on the western coast. The immediate object was to lead the people in the illegal manufacture of salt in pans from the sea. The Government salt tax, he claimed, struck at the poor who were less able to meet the burden of supporting an extravagant alien power than any other community. The tax moreover was on the one commodity more essential to the people than any other. Government had of course applied the tax as an imposition which could be levied without hardship by virtue of its infinitesimal application over a very large population. We are not concerned with the pros and cons. For Mr. Gandhi's purpose the circumstances had all the elements of a wide appeal to the nation, with the background of a popular grievance. In actual fact there had been no recent new legislation in regard to salt and the tax might equally well have been singled out for attack in any previous year. In a long and engagingly audacious letter to the Viceroy, Lord Irwin,<sup>1</sup> it seemed that the underlying motive behind his proposed drastic expression of civil disobedience was a vague protest at the whole economic policy of Government. 'The rupee ratio at 1s. 6d. drained India of a few crores of rupees by a stroke of the pen. The pressure of revenue was overpowering nor was it exercised for the good of the ryot. Indeed it was designed to crush him.' Finally the Viceroy's own salary was quoted as utterly inconsistent with the taxable capacity of the people. Independence only could wrest change, and unless an assurance could be received of measures contemplated to deal with these tyrannies, on a specified date a campaign of civil disobedience would open at Dandi in defiance of the law, by the private collection of salt.

The march to Dandi was spectacular. There is a Biblical appeal around a movement which initiates with a pilgrimage on foot; and psychologically Gandhi was the ideal figure for such a setting. It was surrounded by all the hysterical publicity of the Congress Press, a publicity which Gandhi himself can hardly have welcomed. For a time Government stayed their hands, contenting themselves with Press Ordinances and a declaration against the Congress as an unlawful association. But when, after nearly five weeks, a second letter was dispatched to the Viceroy declaring the intention to seize the salt tax depot at Dharasana, action against Gandhi could no longer be postponed and he was arrested and confined in Yeravda jail at Poona.

The first Round Table Conference was therefore assembled without representation from the Congress and its deliberations lacked reality. In India, Motilal Nehru, a pillar of strength to the Congress in administration and oratory, died; and his death seemed to indicate the opportunity for a return to calmer negotiation. This time Gandhi took the initiative and wrote to Lord Irwin indicating his anxiety to meet and discuss the whole constitutional position.

There followed a series of talks which were unique in the annals of political negotiation. To those who search for the vindication of

<sup>1</sup> Now Lord Halifax, British Ambassador in Washington.

Christian principle in its most simple form, here was a pure example of settlement by compromise demanding the very highest standard of political morality. The cynic was inclined to smile at the picture of the Mahatma on his daily pilgrimage to the Viceroy's great Palace. Yet if there was scope for a caricaturist, it is certain that the settlement which followed was due to those elements of greatness in the two leading personalities which were able to recognize the value in the other and concede when only concession could advance political progress.

Political prisoners were released and the civil disobedience movement was called off. Later, Mr. Gandhi was elected as the Congress representative to the second Round Table Conference which opened in London on the 7th September 1931. While a few members of the Congress attended in their individual capacity, as the accredited Congress representative Mr. Gandhi was alone. Had he had the moral support of one or two of his prominent officers, it is probable that he would have made a deeper impression on the deliberations than he was actually able to effect. But in his isolation he appeared not at home in the eager sophisticated Conference atmosphere, and there is something slightly pathetic in the picture of his frail figure, clothed in the khaddar of his Ashram, moving among the political giants of the West and the more pliable bargainers of the East. Yet he played his part in an adequate way ; and it is more probable that, because we had come to anticipate his most unexpected methods of political warfare accompanied always by protestations of good will, we were now mildly surprised. It seemed that he had returned to a less active and more conventional approach to the Indian problem. How wrong we were !

In the meanwhile in India the Congress had taken the law into their own hands. In the United Provinces a no-rent campaign had been launched. In Bengal officials had been murdered, and on the Frontier Abdul Ghaffar Khan had established the "red-shirts" on a military basis. It all amounted to a direct challenge to British control, and soon after Mr. Gandhi's return he was again arrested along with other Congress leaders.

The Prime Minister, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, in the absence of agreement in conference, published the "Communal Award." This gave separate representation to the untouchables and thus would perpetuate their status as a community outside the Hindu fold. From prison Mr. Gandhi produced his own solution and, to add weight to his proposals, embarked on yet another fast. As a result the representation of the untouchables is now secured by a slightly complicated procedure by which their own voters first select candidates. From these, Caste Hindus and untouchables alike vote for candidates to fill seats reserved for the latter, which seats are shown as included in the total for the Province under the classification of "General Constituency" seats. Mr. Gandhi's fast was effective in bringing Hindu and scheduled-caste leaders together in an agreement which was sealed in the Poona Pact and accepted by Government.

Mr. Gandhi had gone to jail in January 1932. In May 1933 he

was again free and there followed a long period of withdrawal from active politics and concentration on the social and rural side of his work. Twice again however he was to monopolize public attention in India with fasts; in 1939 and 1943. In 1939 Mr. Gandhi and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel went to Rajkot State to secure certain demands in the form of Congress representation in a Committee working on State reforms. The Ruler was accused of breaking his terms of settlement after agreement. Gandhi's fast soon brought intervention and Sir Maurice Gwyer, the Chief Justice of India, was dispatched to give judgment. Mr. Gandhi broke his fast.

The second occasion, in 1943, is still fresh in the public memory. Once again it was carried out from behind the prison walls of the Aga Khan's palatial home at Poona. There was at first doubt as to whether it was to be for a limited period or a fast "unto death." The unknown factor produced an almost hysterical note of sensation in the Indian Press. A torrential spate of letters poured in from established leaders of liberalism down to obscure students and Hindu political mountebanks. A noticeable feature was that for the many hundreds of appeals for release addressed to Government, appeals often tactlessly accompanied by the most virulent and scurrilous attacks, not one appeal was addressed to the Mahatma to discontinue his fast.

Mr. Gandhi has recently been released for reasons of ill-health. Subsequent events associated with him, the Jinnah conversations of October 1944 and the earlier correspondence with Lord Wavell, belong more to recent political history than to the story of the man himself. With Jinnah he was patient and conciliatory. With the Viceroy he was provocative, yet ready as always with the occasional disarming concession to good will and courtesy. These matters are more appropriately touched on in another chapter and with this broad background of the stormy events which have fashioned his life, it remains to place in its true perspective the value and meaning of his teaching.

## CHAPTER III

### GANDHI—THE PHILOSOPHER

IT MAY HAVE BEEN NOTED THAT I AM ONE WHO BELIEVES THAT TRUTH is seldom to be found in superlatives and that often in a synthesis of opposing views lies the right assessment of a mind or character.

Recently I experienced something of this impact of conflicting opinions on Mahatma Gandhi. Up in Simla I had been to see an old friend, the Rajkumari Amrit Kaur.<sup>1</sup> Amrit's father was the late Raja Sir Harnam Singh, a member of a branch of the Kapurthala family which turned to Christianity. The family have a distinguished record. The eldest brother, Sir Maharaj Singh, has had a fine career in the Indian Civil

<sup>1</sup>See Chapter I, page 18. She was among the Congress nominees for inclusion in the proposed Council (Simla Conference, June 1945).

Service and is now a prominent member of the Liberal Federation. Another brother, Shamsheer, was a successful doctor and a third brother, Dulip, retired as a judge of the Lahore High Court. I first knew Amrit when she was winning tennis tournaments all over the Punjab. She had returned from school at Sherborne where she had won herself many honours. To-day, after a life of social service in India, she is as unsophisticated and charming as ever. We have met only once in a while; yet her intense personality always imparts its impression swiftly and deep; and that impression is wholly of sincerity and lofty ideal. In her time she has done much work for Mr. Gandhi for whom she has that profound affection and respect shared by all his intimate associates. And so when she assures me of his greatness and sincerity, I accept much of her judgment for I believe in the scientific diffusion of all thought. For me she confirmed the impression that has for many years lingered, that the essential nature and influence of Gandhi are good. The reader will have missed the point if he thinks that I was persuaded of Gandhi's higher nature and integrity in so many words in a chance conversation. The force of the impression I carried away lay essentially in what was unsaid between us. I left Amrit's house with a queer resentment at the conditions which so circumscribed a life that could and should be allowed to exploit its talents for the betterment of its fellow-citizens, men and women. She was then under police surveillance after release from jail and was not allowed far from the precincts of her house.

Two days later in Delhi, at a lunch party of Indians and Englishmen, we were discussing the limited reports received on Mr. Beverley Nichols' book, *Verdict on India*. "At last a man has had the courage to state the truth about Gandhi," was the opinion expressed by someone; and the sentiment of his criticism was generally approved by all members of the party. I repeat that in between the picture of a saint and a deceiver will lie the truth.

In those early days, when Mr. Gandhi was championing the case of his fellow-citizens in South Africa, he came perhaps nearer to moments of greatness than ever in the succeeding years. The cause then was unambiguous and the terms for battle were clear. In plain language Mr. Gandhi had a good case and he gave every ounce of his physical and mental capacity to the fight. Any Englishman capable of objective reflection will readily admit his unqualified courage and tenacity of purpose through those early years.

The cause of Indians in South Africa cannot compare in scope with the breadth and imagination behind the cause of the Constitutional freedom of India. The one concerned 30,000 souls; the other, 400 millions. But the latter issue, precisely in its spaciousness, becomes too great a burden for the mind of one man to comprehend.

The nature of the freedom of India connotes that it cannot and never will be realized merely by the exertion of the will to freedom. Professor Julian Huxley goes even further than this and speaks of "The passionate desire for freedom from foreign domination which we may note is very far from the desire for freedom itself." This is profoundly true and



patriotism based on a common hatred is very far from that less spectacular but deeper patriotism which still serves on when the glamour of a mission is removed. If Gandhi lives to see the fulfilment of his dreams with an Indian Cabinet appointed by the Indian people governing an Indian India, his test will only have begun.

However conservative the British Government may have been over India's problem, it is only a statement of historic fact that progress to final freedom has been made; and it is in the rough and tumble of the past 24 years and in the gradual extension of Indian control in a hundred different ways that the case for Indian freedom cannot now retain its former conviction, because in so many of its aspects freedom has already arrived. In these circumstances Gandhi's case has become less effective than in the times when he could rightly claim that the path he trod was hard and straight. The promise of freedom after the war is now recorded with the choice either of remaining in the British Commonwealth or seceding out of it. What more is there left for Mr. Gandhi to ask for?

The disciples of Gandhi in England and America claim that the British approach even in negotiation is vitiated by the impossibility of seeing India as an equal negotiator. We may be planning for a future status of equality; but that is not enough. We must come down from the clouds *now* during the planning stage. We must rid ourselves of that attitude of a dispenser of favours to an inferior partner. An energetic champion of Gandhi, Carl Heath, writes:—

“The imperialist mind is always tempted to make reservations, to see itself as belonging to a superior race and a more experienced politic which gives it the right to be the ruling party. Even in its most liberal mood it retains a sense of ‘we to them’.”<sup>1</sup>

Their solicitude for Indian susceptibility can be carried too far. Negotiation when it takes place must be as between an existing British-Indian administration and a future Indian administration. However careful the former are in their conference manners, while negotiations are proceeding they still have to govern. There is bound to be a slight psychological background of an offer and an acceptance. It need savour of no superiority or inferiority complexes. It is only an interpretation of the existing factual situation. Furthermore, too scrupulous a regard for the way we express ourselves gives Indian leaders little credit for any statesmanship or political tenacity of their own.

My reading of the situation is that, with the prospect of the fight drawing to its close, the Mahatma has fallen to exaggeration of such causes for dispute as may still arise. It seems that there was a search for any turn in the political situation which could conveniently be exploited for a potential grievance to enable the public to be faced with a case for upholding the national dignity or setting right a wrong.

Only by some such psychological process can one account for the frequent type of loose utterance which has recently come from Mr. Gandhi

<sup>1</sup> *Gandhi*, by Carl Heath. Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1944.

and which Sir Richard Tottenham, the Home Secretary, referred to as savouring of "incredible levity."

Englishmen would claim that, if the British method is unduly ponderous, in matters such as deciding on a food policy or thrashing out a new constitution every conceivable aspect of a situation is weighed and every possible collective and personal reaction is considered. Only when a full assessment of all the factors is complete, will a decision be taken and a course of action indicated. Imagination may be lacking, but there is always thorough research. In contrast, a decision dictated by an "inner voice" can have little in common with such cold logic. If the men of our destinies had to sit in a seance room awaiting divine inspiration, Mr. Gandhi's method of appeal to the supernatural might be successful. In the modern Conference Hall, where ultimately decisions affecting the welfare of nations must be given, there can be no place for hasty judgment or action based on inspiration however lofty the force behind it.

It has been the habit to compare the position of Gandhi with that of the great Christian saints, even with the Founder himself. There is an obvious affinity between the philosophy of the good life as preached by Christ and the philosophy of non-violence as preached by the Mahatma. Yet, there the matter ends. At frequent points they meet each other. But there is one fundamental diversion. We have always based our conception of Christ's approach to that other world of international relations in which the human race has tied itself up on the spirit which underlies the counsel "Render unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things which are God's." The interpretation of this in terms of modern times can only be in the assumption that each man has but to observe the precepts of the complete Christian principle in setting about his daily work without further inquiry into the nature of that work and Utopia would be with us to-morrow. In contrast much of Mahatma Gandhi's life has been devoted to a penetrating inquiry into the nature of the daily task.

It would be the height of hypocrisy to claim that the Christian countries have in any way attempted to live up to the teaching of the religion under which Europe has risen, and Mr. Gandhi is certainly a far better Christian than most of us. But when claims are made for him seeking to compare his teaching with that of Christ, a critic must draw attention to a very real distinction of principles.

Gandhi has never claimed for himself anything more than the status of a profound student of Christianity with particular emphasis on the Sermon on the Mount as the pinnacle of Christian expression; and frequently his admirers, British and Indian, have done him more harm than good by highly extravagant claims in this respect on his behalf. The conception of Christ as the actual divine revelation has never been accepted by him.

It is here appropriate to turn to the problem of non-violence, for the very word itself must conjure up a picture of Christian reticence, whether in the face of aggression or not. A particular feature which

immediately requires recognition is that a non-violent man is a very different proposition from a non-violent mass of men. Individually the non-violent man may be a pacifist in the nobler meaning of the word. He may also render to Cæsar the things of Cæsar, serving his God in the process. But a mass of men applying non-violence for a particular purpose will immediately assume the nature of a weapon, and once one speaks of a weapon one is dangerously near to discussing violence. There is no such thing as a non-violent act, for non-violence is a condition of inaction, a negation of action itself. If I throw myself in front of a tram, apart from interfering with the liberty of the public, the people who have paid to travel in the tram, I am presumably also removed by a couple of policemen. I may either allow myself to be carried away, in which case, if I am consistent, I will return again to obstruct the tramway, or I may offer resistance in order to produce the same result which is to prolong interference with the tram traffic. If I do not offer resistance and do not return to my obstruction, I have really done extremely little to effect my object; so the presumption is that, controlled by my non-violent sentiment, I will again return to obstruct the tramway. Now it is clear to the meanest intelligence that such a process, repeated many times and by many satyagrahis, is sooner or later inevitably bound to result in some kind of physical conflict between the two parties concerned. From small beginnings there will develop physical resistance, at first negligible but gradually increasing. The case has been elaborated with the object of showing that it is quite impossible for any man to say where non-violence ends and violence begins; from which follows that the only safe assumption is that violence must begin at the opening move in the game and not as a final remedy at the hands of a cruel if exasperated administration. This must apply to non-violence in all its manifestations of picketing and obstruction; and in modern India, where rightly or wrongly the public must accept the existing Government institutions if immediate chaos is to be avoided, the same laws will govern non-violent non-co-operation as applied to Courts of Justice, railway travel and all the other public services which have at various times experienced the attack of Mr. Gandhi's many-sided weapon. Could non-violence be isolated from non-co-operation it might remain the innocuous passive state which its name implies. But non-co-operation, in the forms in which it has always been exercised, implies action, and it is then that trouble is inevitable.

The finer senses of Gandhi may or may not betoken the saint. But it is not so much with what Gandhi is, with which we are concerned, as with what his public believe him to be. Of this there is no shadow of doubt. I have talked with many Indians representing many shades of opinion on the matter. All agree that within a wide circle as represented by the more educated youth of the Bombay Presidency, the Central Provinces, the eastern portion of the United Provinces, and Bihar, the Mahatma is regarded as a saint; while in all big towns throughout India, there are large sections of the population who accept him as the embodiment of Indian nationhood. An Indian in touch with Congress leadership

put it to me forcefully when he stated that if the Working Committee indicated a certain policy and Mr. Gandhi chose another, the mass of Congress opinion would to a man follow the Mahatma and not the Committee. We should make no mistake about it. The unqualified veneration of Mr. Gandhi as a saint who can do no wrong is the religion of approximately a hundred million Indians.

This state of affairs is most unfortunately fully exploited by some of the *minor stars in the Congress fold*. Master Tara Singh, the Sikh leader, who in his time has had much personal contact with Gandhi, told me that provincial Congressmen have frequently played on the feelings of a gullible public for their own purposes by free use of the name and prestige of the leader. This above all will explain how a movement which may genuinely initiate with non-violent intentions is transformed in the hands of less responsible members of the Congress staff into something very different from Gandhi's intention. There is for instance nothing non-violent in the make-up of such a man as J. P. Narayan.<sup>1</sup>

Western inquirers have frequently thought of Mr. Gandhi and his teaching in terms of eastern philosophy. A genius for religion is rightly considered as the prerogative of the East, so that the ethical side to the manifestations of the Mahatma's mind is regarded as a synthesis of Christianity and the more mystic implications of Hindu teaching, with the latter predominating. As a man of religion, Mr. Gandhi borrows from all denominations and is almost certainly a leading authority on the Bhagavad Gita.<sup>2</sup> But in its practical effect it is untrue to think of his preaching as springing from the foundations of eastern philosophy.

The broad structure of eastern philosophy rests on the conception of a union with the divine realized only by the overcoming of all attachment to the material things of this earth. Extremes of the senses are by a scientific mental process to be completely conquered. Thus love and hate, courage and fear, pleasure and sorrow, are gradually eliminated until the Atman or soul, being released from the bonds which bind it to the earth, is free to become one with its maker. It is however not possible to dispense entirely with action since certain functions must be recognized to support life. But in their execution there will in the true yogic state be complete detachment and unconscious performance of Karma.

It will be very apparent that all this is a long way from the sermons of Mr. Gandhi. There may be no hatred behind his chastisement. But the mere fact that he chastises separates him from the world of the Hindu philosopher.

For final consideration, there is the Mahatma's work in the sphere of social service, undertaken in that missionary spirit which has characterized the highest endeavour of Indians and Europeans. In the forefront is his effort towards the emancipation of women.

<sup>1</sup> Jaya Prakash Narayan. Lived in America for eight years, working on a fruit farm and studying in various universities. Secretary and Organizer of the Congress Socialist Party. Member of the Congress Working Committee. Now in jail under the Defence of India Rules.

<sup>2</sup> Composed between 600 B.C. and 200 B.C. A later interpretation of the Vedas (which may be regarded as the oldest Hindu scripture) than the Upanishads.

In his book, *Verdict on India*, Mr. Beverley Nichols<sup>1</sup> describes the Congress as a Brahman organization, a description hardly reconcilable with a liberal approach to the status of women and far from accurate.<sup>2</sup> The work undertaken to improve the lot of Indian women by the Congress under Gandhi's leadership has been a bold and impressive achievement. This and continued impact with the West will one day break down all purdah. It is a curious turn of fate which keeps political antagonism alive when, in many respects, ideas and ideals of the contending parties on social reform are often more sympathetic than those which obtain between elements in political co-operation.

It is when we come to the economic implications of Gandhi's teaching that we find the Mahatma entering deep waters. Soon after the last war he came to the logical conclusion that to encourage the spinning-wheel throughout the villages of India was to help the agriculturists both mentally and economically in their many idle hours. The argument was simple. In a letter from Bardoli on the 15th February 1922, Mr. Gandhi wrote:

*"India does not need to be industrialized in the modern sense of the term. It has 750,000 villages scattered over a vast area. The people are rooted to the soil and the vast majority are living a hand-to-mouth life. . . . There is no doubt that the millions are living in enforced idleness for at least four months in the year. Agriculture does not need revolutionary changes. The Indian peasant requires a supplementary industry. The most natural is the introduction of the spinning-wheel."*

The whole Congress machinery has at times therefore been turned over to the administration of what was to be the national industry. Quite rightly Mr. Gandhi was insistent that if the peasant was not to be exploited, development must take place on a basis of thorough decentralization, each village making its own cloth. The organization set up to cope with the actual marketing of cloth and the financial handling of the whole enterprise was the All-India Spinners Association (A.I.S.A.) under the guidance and direction of local Congress Committees.<sup>3</sup> Linked with the success of the movement is the corollary of the boycott of foreign cloth.

Alas, the national economy based on the normal laws of supply and demand is too deeply rooted for any one man to reform. The goal set to the various branches of the A.I.S.A. for wages was a payment of eight annas a day for an eight-hour day. Some branches were more conscientious than others in raising the level of wages. The Maharashtra<sup>4</sup> branch in particular was successful. But the public went where the cloth was cheapest, and the cloth was cheapest where the wages were low; and so the branches which were most successful in raising the standard of living of employees were least successful in marketing their cloth, and

<sup>1</sup> A brief review of this book is given in Chapter XX.

<sup>2</sup> The purdah system came to India with the Moslems. It suited the Brahman conception of the wife and mother as the focus of all family life and thus received every encouragement from them.

<sup>3</sup> The All-India Village Industries Association (A.I.V.I.) also functions under Mr. Gandhi's patronage. Its Secretary, Mr. J. C. Kumarappa, is a well-known exponent of Gandhian economics.

<sup>4</sup> The country of the southern Mahrattas based on Satara and Poona.

the sale of khaddar in one area was defeating the sale of khaddar in another. Vested interest had crept in and the capitalist economy was surreptitiously taking control. While Mr. Gandhi has achieved much human selfishness has circumscribed his efforts to enforce a new economic order at every turn.

Once again, so much of the idealism of the whole movement to encourage village industries and the spinning-wheel appeals to Englishmen who work in India. Our natural affinity is for the simplicity and trust of the villager in contrast to the sullenness of the town. The co-operative movement, aiming at organizing the power of the peasant to resist exploitation, owes its inception to Englishmen and Mr. Gandhi has been enthusiastic to extend its activities for the assistance of spinning. But the only way in which control over cloth prices will ever be effectively exercised is by a complete socialization of the industry in India. The Congress might claim that this could be achieved by a national government deriving its responsibility from the people. What is a national government? If it is an agreed coalition, then an industrial revolution might well be on the map, although the Moslem element has hardly the same views on socialism as Congress economists. Such a government is an idle dream so long as Mr. Jinnah leads the Moslems. If on the other hand a national government is government by majority rule, an All-India Congress ministry would find the practical difficulty of fighting vested interests far too formidable to be able to effect a sweeping programme of nationalization. I have spoken of nationalization in general terms since, quite obviously, if you come to nationalizing the cloth industry, you are in that stage when all industry would be under control.

I am in no position to pass criticism on the relations of Mr. Gandhi with big business as represented by the Ahmadabad mill owners. There has been a good deal of sarcasm at the Mahatma's expense over the alleged tacit understanding between his organization and Indian capitalism in the cloth industry.<sup>1</sup> One particularly powerful firm hunts with the hounds and runs with the hare, being content to take enormous Government war contracts and at the same time holding a solid financial stake in the Congress camp.

Such a relationship is possible only so long as the British Government is there to invite a common attack. But remove the latter and replace it by a Congress Raj and Mr. Gandhi would find that the rich coterie which to-day passes as patriots would almost to a man desert him in his need, for the protection of their own material interests.

The Kasturbhai Memorial Fund in memory of the late Kasturbhai Gandhi, Mr. Gandhi's devoted wife, for the furtherance of social and educational schemes, in a short space of time raised the incredible sum of 12 crores of rupees. This money could not and did not come from the Indian peasant. It came largely from Indian

<sup>1</sup> In May 1945 an unofficial mission of Indian industrialists came to Britain. Mr. Gandhi took the opportunity to castigate the members who spoke and wrote against British rule but in practice made profit out of Government co-operation. He was in fact but voicing the thoughts of many Englishmen and, if his attack was sincere, he clears up much ambiguity which has always attached to his own position in this matter.

capitalists. The Government tend to the view that such generosity is but window-dressing to blur political exploitation. The truth is probably that once again Mr. Gandhi's intention is honest and highly ethical but that his rich admirers are quite ready to turn their cheque signatures to their own advantage.

It is to be remembered that in Russia, so often thought of in India as the sanctuary of all political invention, her social revolution was only achieved at the cost of a previous physical revolution. In face of a national military defeat on the battlefield conditions were ripe for a vast social upheaval. There was a vacuum to be filled. But in India, if a physical revolution is ever attempted by the wilder elements, it must start from scratch and be initiated in cold blood. It would need to eject not the feeble stop-gap administration of Kerensky which was the Russian experience, but a firm, solid structure now deep-rooted and accepted by many millions of the people of India. In view of Mr. Gandhi's recent bewilderingly contradictory utterances on revolutions it is not clear whether he would regard an era in which the people ran amok and the administration broke down as worth the final achievement of unadulterated national control. In any case, while there is left any British responsibility for Indian affairs there can be no question of the achievement of an objective by revolution.

The broader implications of the issue of spinning have been examined with a view to establish that so long as Mr. Gandhi preaches the Charkha and its blessings as a domestic occupation his counsel will take effect for the general assistance of the peasant. But when he attempts to extend a limited success to establish a new economic order in competition with the machine and the impact of international rivalry, we believe that he is inevitably doomed to disappointment.

You cannot put the clock back nor stay the march of man's inventive genius. You cannot therefore boycott the machine. If India were to be governed by such principles, she could never hope to compete in the world of international endeavour, and if free India fails to compete she will remain for ever a hunting-ground for the virile influence of the West in collusion with her own men of big business.

It is of passing interest that the Gandhian picture of British capital exploiting the masses of India to-day rests on very slender foundations; and with income tax in England at the present level there are certainly at the moment a far greater number of men of real wealth in India than in England.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> During the five years previous to 1914, average imports from the United Kingdom were £61,000,000. Exports were £37,000,000, leaving a favourable balance to the United Kingdom of £24,000,000. In 1938-39, the position was completely reversed and there was a favourable balance to India of £8,500,000.

The familiar Congress case of an India bled to impotency by British capitalism was raised again as recently as the 5th April 1945 when a Congressman in the Assembly moved for the removal of Sections 111 to 121 of the Government of India Act, which prohibit discrimination against British trade. In effect, the Sections are entirely negative. As Sir Henry Richardson (leader of the European group) pointed out, they sought merely to give Englishmen the right to carry on and develop business in fair competition with others. The immense strides in industrial progress in India during the last 10 years provided a complete denial of the statement that the Sections hampered the development of Indian business.

In regard to fiscal policy the Fiscal Autonomy Convention of 1921 gives India the right to control its own fiscal affairs and levy duties as it thinks fit.

It sounds simple enough to insist that India is a country of abundant labour and weak in capital, and from this to stress, as Mr. Gandhi has done, that machinery is opposed only in so far as labour-saving devices militate against employment. But the machine both creates and destroys employment; and it is therefore impossible to differentiate between an industrial process which throws men out of work by labour-saving inventions and one which absorbs labour by the very process of its creation.

It is on such issues that there are fundamental differences between Gandhi and the Congress. For the Gandhian philosophy, carried to its logical conclusion, would submit that a free India would not necessarily want to compete in the international arena. Yet I cannot see such worldless ideology being accepted by the Working Committee; and the Working Committee would be right.

May then Mr. Gandhi confine himself to the gospel of the Charkha in its simplest form and not become involved in national economics. Who knows that, by virtue of his great prestige, there will not emerge a sounder synthesis of domestic village economy and higher control? For Mr. Gandhi's ideas are ultimately more permanent than partially successful efforts to adjust an ancient economic order to a modern capitalist world.

We read that the Mahatma is now devoting much thought to the bribery and corruption which everywhere actuate the business of the country in the new opportunities to exploit the conditions of war. If he can achieve some measure of success to arouse the national conscience, he will receive the gratitude of all thinking men throughout India. In the remaining years we would like to think that he will put the seal on a unique life of variety and endeavour by devoting himself to the uncontroversial aspects of his many activities.

In summing up, we behold a life which has been free of material want. The lure of money and our vast Western structure of hedonism have never worried the Mahatma. We see, too, a man often pressed by circumstances into maintaining the position of a national hero striving not to relax or let his public down. For many years his life has belonged to the public and at his age it is but natural that, in endeavouring to keep his finger on the national pulse, there should emerge symptoms of a confusion of ideals and a slowing down of the machine. Particularly was this true during that recent period when, denied the consultation and companionship of his colleagues, he was given no peace by either friend or foe.

I am certain that on many occasions Mahatma Gandhi has been the brake on Congress intentions, for the greater peace of mind of those responsible for law and order, just as he has also been in the van in provocative action of the greatest embarrassment. On the final analysis I think that Englishmen will always recall a hard and clean fighter, a little man of mental and moral courage, of kindness and humour, a man for whom more was claimed than was his due, but who yet rose far above the common standard of achievement in leading his fellow-men,



## CHAPTER IV

## THE MOSLEM LEAGUE—PAKISTAN

THE GREAT POLITICAL ORGANIZATION OF THE MOSLEMS WAS MUCH SLOWER to get into its stride than the Indian National Congress. Moslems, with their simple monotheistic background, are perhaps not so quick to develop that sense of socialism which makes for political acumen. They have survived by the sword and the tradition of the pen is new. The Moslem League therefore did not emerge until twenty-one years after the Congress. It appeared in 1906 in Bengal.

Its organization is simple. Unlike the Congress it accepts the Provinces of British India for its own provincial League Councils. Mr. M. A. Jinnah is its President and has been its driving inspiration since the League's attainment of fresh strength and vitality in the Provincial Assemblies after the 1937 elections. Nawabzada Liaquat Ali Khan is the General Secretary. There is a Working Committee and a Committee of Action and the League also commands a police force of significance known as the "Moslem National Guard."

Sub-Committees are formed for specific purposes, and recently a planning Committee under the Presidentship of Nawab Ali Nawaz Jung of Hyderabad was appointed to consider post-war reconstruction with particular reference to the industrialization of the Pakistan areas. We could wish that the League's cultural and economic interests, which formerly were their major preoccupations, were to-day half so prominent.

There was a time when its co-operation with Congress seemed a practical possibility. That was in 1916 when the abortive Lucknow Pact was framed. But the two organizations drifted apart and have never since looked like reaching an agreement.

Until the recent fracas with the Punjab Government, discipline in the League had been well maintained. It received a severe test when in the early days of the war some members of the League accepted the Viceroy's invitation to join the National Defence Council without reference to their President. The President promptly called on them to resign. Two members, the Begum Shah Nawaz and Sir Sultan Ahmed, refused and were expelled from the League for five years. The others, the Premiers of the Punjab, Assam and Bengal, obeyed. But the Bengal Premier retaliated by resigning from the League.

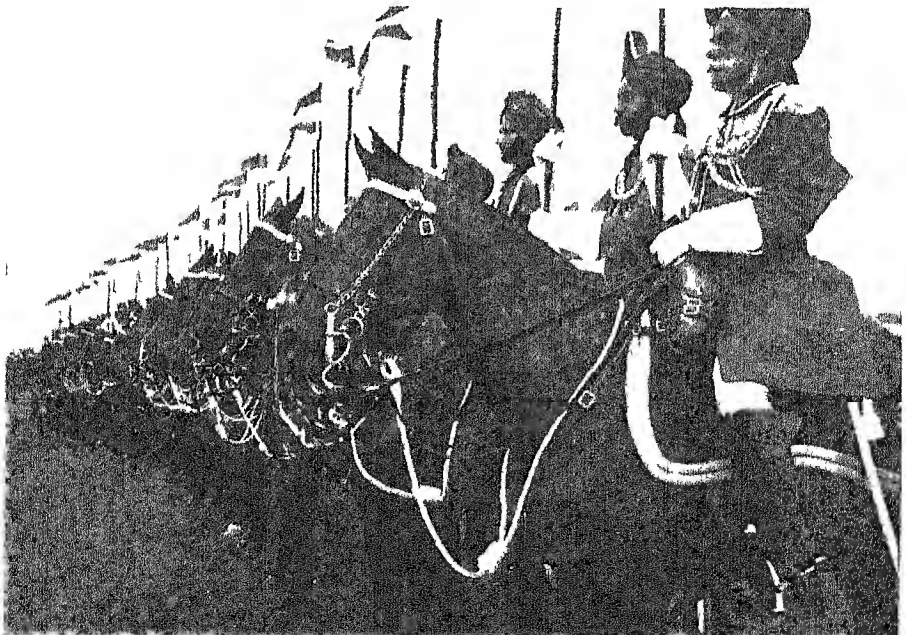
In 1937 the League was for the first time in the arena as a political force strong enough to influence All-India policy. It by no means swept the board in the Moslem constituencies. Indeed, in the Punjab and the Frontier Province it achieved nothing. There was therefore a curious situation by which it had progressed most in its minority areas.

Within its own counsels fissiparous tendencies arose, but they were never strong enough to affect the general forward march to the exclusive

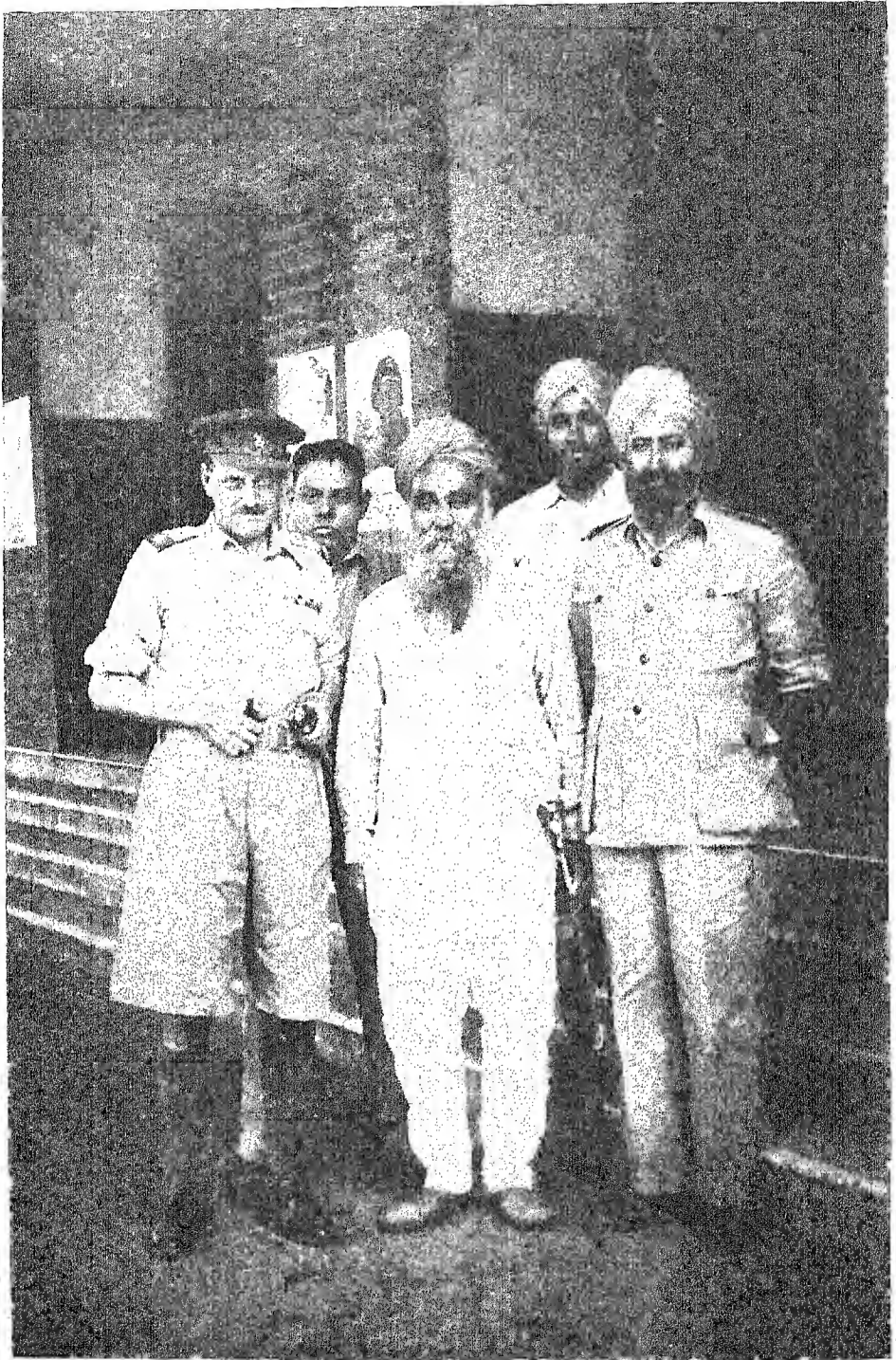


#### RELIGION IN THE REGIMENT

The Granthi carrying the Granth Sahib at a recruits swearing in ceremony



[Photograph by the Hon. Mrs. Birdwood  
Governor's Bodyguard, Bombay]



Rao Bahadur Ghasi Ram      Sardar Sohan Singh Dora  
Lt.-Colonel C. B. Birdwood      Master Tara Singh      Major Sujjan Singh

policy of separation. One such minor disintegration was the emergence in 1940 of the All-India Independent Moslem Conference under the late Premier of Sind, Khan Bahadur Allah Baksh. The Conference has lingered on and at intervals shows signs of spasmodic revival through the energies of Mr. A. K. Fazlul-Huq in Bengal. It has recently borrowed the championship of the Moslem minorities in Hindu areas as its objective; but it lacks the emotional vitality of the League and one must conclude that it is a spent force.

The Moslem Shias of India have never been happy co-operators with the League, a factor often conveniently ignored when the League rather loosely claims to represent 100 million Moslems. In April 1945 Mr. Laljee, a former mayor of Bombay and member of the Central Assembly, cabled to Lord Wavell, then in England, in the name of 20 million Shias. These are his words: "The Shias have completely lost all confidence in the sense of fair play and justice of the Sunni Moslems and their political organization, the All-India Moslem League. They have been, and are, suffering from the evils of Sunni majority rule and oppression."

The issue of Pakistan is of comparatively recent adoption. I doubt if any Moslem had heard of it ten years ago. Professor Coupland attributes the origin of the name to some Indian students at Cambridge in 1933, who put together the initial letters of the Punjab, Afghanistan, Kashmir and Sind, the Frontier Province being conveniently regarded as of Afghan composition.<sup>1</sup> They may also have realized that the first three letters composed the word "Pak" which means "pure"!

During the last ten years variations on the theme of separation have been produced ranging between a Continent of two, four and even seven zones. The latter plan, a Federal conception, was elaborated by the late Sir Sikander Hayat Khan in great detail in his *Outlines of a Scheme of Indian Federation*.

Several years ago the late Sir Mohammed Iqbal spoke of an amalgamation of Provinces in the North-West to form a single State which would continue either within or without the British Empire; and it was undoubtedly the power of his massive personality which gave permanence to a conception which for a long time remained but a vague political fantasy.

Yet with the passing of time and the consolidation of the League under firm and autocratic leadership there seems to have been no preference expressed for one scheme as opposed to another; for as yet the principle of partition as the goal had received no public commendation in Moslem circles. This event had to wait for the League session at Lahore in 1940 when a resolution in the following terms was passed:—

"The establishment of completely independent States formed by demarcating geographically contiguous units into regions which shall be so constituted with such territorial readjustments as may be

<sup>1</sup> *Report on the Constitutional Problem in India*, Part II, Chapter XVII R. Coupland.

necessary. The areas in which Moslems are numerically in a majority, as in the North-Western and Eastern zones of India, shall be grouped together to constitute 'Independent States' which shall be the national homelands in which the constituent unit shall be autonomous and sovereign."

The rest of the resolution was concerned with the protection of Moslem minorities in Hindu India and Hindu minorities in Pakistan.

This resolution for the first time confirmed the programme of partition, and later in the same session the Working Committee were instructed to frame a Constitution which would provide for the two regions assuming responsibility for defence, external affairs, customs and the various matters associated with the central administration of an independent State.

So far as I am aware, these further details have never been publicly elaborated. When Mr. Jinnah visited Jullundur in 1943 to open the local Islamia College, over a cup of tea I suggested to him that the public should know more of the full implications of Pakistan. We in Jullundur were living in that critical area of the Punjab where the readjustment of boundaries would almost certainly be called for if partition proposals ever received constitutional sanction.<sup>1</sup> Negotiations would then have to be pursued with the greatest tact and caution; and to a layman it seemed highly dangerous that the complex situations which would arise should not first be fully analysed in free discussion. At the time Mr. Jinnah's attitude was, as always, that when the principle had been established the details would follow. I was once fool enough to buy a horse, on a newspaper advertisement, without inspection. It seems to me that in this mystery with which the Pakistan project is surrounded the public of India are in much the same position.

Mr. Jinnah is persuasive. He spoke of the partition of Ireland and the post-war settlement of Europe in 1919, quoting the latter case as one in which details followed principles. I could not help reflecting that, had the details been first thrashed out by local experts before even the cumbersome Assembly of Versailles had collected, how much happier a Europe might have emerged. I thought, too, of that day when in a cheap theatrical setting hundreds of Allied Delegates watched the great ones sign, without apparently having the faintest idea of the terms of the Treaty they were sponsoring!<sup>2</sup>

So soon as we get beyond slogans the particular problem round which controversy will rage is the demarcation of boundaries. It is clear that the League has hitherto avoided the issue, since, once there is geographical precision on paper, there will be violent protests from the minorities in the boundary areas, whether in Pakistan or in Hindustan. If trouble is to come, the League would prefer to face it later rather than sooner, and in the meanwhile there is a pious hope abroad that those concerned will in waning apathy one day accept a *fait accompli*.

<sup>1</sup> These issues are fully discussed in Chapter V.

<sup>2</sup> F.M. Sir Henry Wilson, Bt., G.C.B., D.S.O. *His Life and Memoirs*, Vol. II. By Maj.-Gen. Sir C. E. Callwell, K.C.B.

But if we know little yet about the precise intentions over the detailed adjustments, there is sufficient data at least to study the general nature of the two-nation claim and to decide its equity and feasibility. It is undoubtedly true that from 1937 to 1940, by underestimating the vitality of the League and excluding it from their counsels, the Congress added justification to the League's accusation that they could expect no justice or recognition from a party which was set on a complete monopoly of government. The Congress hotly denied these charges with resolutions at frequent intervals declaring their determination to uphold the religious and cultural rights of all minorities.

Such appeasement was, however, offered only to those Moslems who accepted Congress membership, and the co-operation of the League for the purposes of any form of coalition government was never sought. To exacerbate growing antagonism Congress Provincial Governments tactlessly distributed appointments and privileges to their own disciples without consideration for the League's taut susceptibilities. It was in such conditions that the Pakistan conception as a panacea for wounded pride received its impetus. It gave Moslems an anchor for a drifting relationship which was rapidly deteriorating into fixed and honest hatred.

Having experienced, as they claim, complete frustration under Congress domination, in their search for a country of their own they are at present driven to emphasize rather than conceal their differences of language, culture, custom and philosophy. They impress on us that the Moslem worships one God while the Hindu worships many. To the Moslem the pig is unclean while beef is relished. The Hindu eats pork but will not touch beef since the cow is sacred. Even the methods of the slaughter of meat are different.<sup>1</sup> The Moslem believes in the equality of all men. The Hindu divides society into many strata. The religion of one is austere and born of the desert. The religion of the other is manifold and springs from the jungle. These are realities which our Moslem friends are never tired of impressing on Englishmen prepared to listen.

What is our own conclusion in these matters? The conception of Moslems as friends comes very readily to Englishmen who work in India. In the North as we move among their virile society and encounter a mode of life which to a certain extent we share the pity and folly of the new tangled relations become very real. The League leaders in the North, men such as Raja Ghazanfar Ali in the Punjab, are men who have given us unqualified loyalty and friendship. It is impossible, too, to forget that in 1942, at a time when Congress nationalists were busy destroying railway stations and post offices with violence which did not stop at murder, hardly a single Moslem was involved in these activities. When one has finished with all legal analysis, it is but human for a community to wish to reciprocate such friendship as it receives.

Subsequently<sup>2</sup> I have attempted to show that, however real the gulf

<sup>1</sup> The Moslem kills his meat by "Halal" (cutting the throat). The Hindu eats "Jhatka" meat (cutting off the head).

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter XIV.

may appear which separates the two communities, if the laws of nature could have their way, then within a decade that gulf would be bridged.

If the areas to be defined as Hindustan and Pakistan represented ethnological groups of real identity, then it would be reasonable to expect the much smaller minorities involved to fall in with a scheme of separation in the general interest and, if necessary, allow themselves to be absorbed with loss of identity, for the greatest good of the greatest number. But the minority numbers in the boundary areas are too formidable and their saturation too thick to permit of this.

For these reasons the analogy of Europe is not a true one. A prominent Baluchistan member of the League, Qazi Mohammed Isa, once argued with me to some purpose that it was hardly practical to expect India to achieve that which Europe had hitherto been unable to establish. His meaning was that since the national groups of Europe had failed to co-operate for common purposes it was only right that such groups in India should be allowed the power of self-expression. He was silent on the question of subsequent co-operation between groups after they had assumed their separate status. Here again we are confronted by the refusal of the League to commit itself to any intention in regard to inter-State alliances even after conceding partition.

Recently Mr. Jinnah repeated the European analogy in reply to the Viceroy who had plainly hinted at his own sentiments on the partition principle, with a reference to the immutability of geography.

Europe is an area in which geographical features and the shape of her coast-line have encouraged separatist tendencies. Around Spain or Italy or the Scandinavian countries the sea has been an agency to build nations and foster their individuality. But where round India could one say that a Moslem sea ended or a Hindu sea began? Furthermore, whatever have been the influences to cause groups in Europe either to come together or draw apart, the fact remains that to-day no European group or nation contains more than a minority of five per cent of another group within its territory. In the one country, Switzerland, in which national groups are interlocked sufficiently to become inseparable, there is representative democratic Government over the whole area and a peace which is the envy of the rest of Europe!

But even if the analogy of Europe bore logic, would that be reason for despairing of a united India? Whereas in Europe after the war the political curtain rose on a number of completely separate units with no constitutional structure whatsoever to suggest a Federation, in India there is already firmly established a vast machinery which, if not turned to use, must be thrown on the scrap heap. In the West the creation of unity must start from scratch. In the East the spade work is accomplished. Is it therefore really beyond Indian ingenuity to achieve a unity which might serve as an example of political wisdom to Europe and the world? If this be impossible, then must we sadly admit that any degree of mutual co-operation which the two communities have commanded, and such good will as seemingly now exists among those thrown together in the administration, has been but artificial illusion,



the passing sentiments suggested by a chance contact with Britain over a limited period of Indian history.

When I came to examine the British attitude to the Hindu-Moslem problem over a number of years it seemed to me that I unearthed a considerable confusion of thought. Many years ago Lord Dufferin had expressed the traditional British approach in unequivocal terms:—

“But perhaps the most patent characteristic of our Indian cosmos is its division into two mighty political communities as distinct from each other as the poles asunder in their religious faith, their historical antecedents, their social organization and their natural aptitudes; on the one hand the Hindus with their polytheistic beliefs, their temples adorned with images and idols, their veneration for the sacred cow, their elaborate caste distinctions and their habits of submission to successive conquerors; on the other hand, the Mohammedans with their monotheism, their iconoclastic fanaticism, their animal sacrifice, their social equality and their remembrance of the days when enthroned at Delhi they reigned supreme from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin.”

Years later, Lord Morley spoke of Hindus and Moslems as follows:—<sup>1</sup>

“Only let us not forget that the difference between Mohammedanism and Hinduism is not the mere difference of articles of religious faith or dogmas. It is a difference in life, in tradition, in history, in all the social things as well as articles of beliefs that constitute a community. Do not let us forget that in talking of Hindus and Mohammedans we are dealing with and are brought face to face with historic issues.”

From Dufferin to Morley is a long era: yet their words fairly represent the British approach to their responsibilities in India from Victorian times until the war of 1914-18. The inference that British rule is the only assurance for peace and ordered government, though not specifically stated, is underlined in every sentence. The statements offer ample scope for those who enjoy using the old accusation of “divide and rule.” In recent years we have rigorously repudiated this charge and instead we are now busy trying to assert that India’s salvation lies in unity. What is the truth? While we may honestly repudiate the suggestion of any studied intention behind our past policy, I think it is fair to say that we have been content to acquiesce in a passive situation of two irreconcilable communities.

In so far as Lords Dufferin and Morley were justifying the presence of a third agency, the British, for the circumstances of their time they were absolutely right. But a lot of water has since run under the bridge and to-day we have to reconcile the fact of two communities—and no one attempts to deny that fact—with the growing demand for an

<sup>1</sup> Both quotations are from a pamphlet, *Unworthy of Wardha*, by Mahadev Desai.



India governed only by Indians. It is not so much the unity of India which we preach as the *need* for unity; and the new approach is not a metamorphosis of opinion but a recognition of Indian aspirations to rule their own country. This is the explanation of the anomaly that, since the League has adopted unequivocal partition as its main demand, British opinion has hardened in support of a united India. In actual fact we go further than the two-nation hypothesis. We declare that there are twenty nations; not two.<sup>1</sup> And in doing so we assert that it is far easier to bring unity to twenty scattered elements than to two such elements each showing only vague geographical cohesion. If that cohesion went further and if we could draw a line across the map from the mouth of the Indus to Ambala and find the Moslems to the north of it and the Hindus to the south, there would be an end to all argument. But the Moslem seed was scattered with haphazard caprice over the face of India and unless Nazi methods of population transfer are resorted to we must continue to hope for counsels of tolerance to prevail upon the League leaders.

To those Englishmen who have worked the Administration, who look back over the history of the past hundred years and see the possibility of partition looming where at least administrative cohesion has been created, Pakistan can only be regarded as fundamentally putting back the clock; for once the administrative machine which has held this Continent together collapses it is doubtful if it ever again could be reconstructed.

It was a sad whim of chance that, as I worked to these conclusions, my eye caught a Press report from New York in which Mr. Louis Fischer was attributed with the following comment:—

“The Cripps proposals for Indian freedom are just another British formula. The British policy in India is to divide and rule. There will be no unity until after the British leave. Not until then will they agree to come together and work out a constitution and means of unity, but the British do not want to liquidate their Empire.”

At such moments, one can only fall back on a sense of humour. A fair deduction from Mr. Fischer's impenetrable wisdom would be that the President of the Moslem League has told him of his forthcoming readiness “to agree to come together and work out a constitution and means of unity” after the British have left. I, in my ignorance, along with a few million Indians, might ask “What happens in the meanwhile?” The Australian Constitution, with all the foundations for agreement, took four years to place on the Statute Book. What a happy four years would be round the corner for India! Such wild talk seems almost to constitute a deliberate attempt to deceive the public.

<sup>1</sup> In 1858 John Bright used these words: “Does any man with the smallest glimmering of common sense believe that so great a country with its 20 different nations and its 20 languages can ever be bound up and consolidated into one compact and enduring Empire.”

The object of an analysis of the British attitude is to establish that, whatever currents of opinion have influenced our policy in the past, in striking a balance to-day our policy is that of a completely open mind. While it is clear in which direction our hopes lie, the Draft Declaration brought by Sir Stafford Cripps recognizes the right of self-determination and that Declaration still holds the field.

But intelligent comment is stifled in the absence of any details. The League resolution of 1940 stated:—

“The areas in which Moslems are in a majority shall be grouped together to constitute ‘Independent States,’ which shall be the national homelands in which the constituent unit shall be autonomous and sovereign.”

To me, it is not clear whether the Independent States referred to are the existing Provinces with boundary adjustment or the two main Pakistan areas. Reading this passage within its complete context the latter assumption seems the more probable.

Again, early in 1940 Mr. Jinnah had written of the two-nation theory as follows: “A constitution must be evolved that recognizes that there are in India two nations, who both must share the governance of their common motherland.”<sup>1</sup> In this, there appears some hope of reconciling Pakistan with an Indian Union. But it was written before the League resolution of 1940 and, without further indications from the League President, this issue, as all others, is left in nebulous speculation.

“Autonomous and sovereign” States presumably control all aspects of national life and the present All-India services, the railways, the defence forces, Customs, posts and telegraphs have all to face a major upheaval if Pakistan is to be interpreted as a State completely divorced from Hindustan.

The geographical implications are as vague as every other aspect of the proposals, and in addition to the two accepted Pakistan zones of Bengal and North-West India, at least two others have at times been mooted. One presumes that zones in exercise of autonomy would not be subject to a self-imposed central Moslem authority. Any such attempt would be fraught with impossible administrative difficulties.

Of the various zones by far the most homogeneous is that of the North-West where the four Provinces of Sind, Baluchistan, the North-West Frontier Province and the Punjab could, with adjustment in the eastern Punjab, form a predominantly Moslem area and a State of economic stability. If these four provinces were to express mutual sentiment for amalgamation on economic grounds, their claims would be difficult to ignore. A form of Pakistan might well then emerge without any unpleasant background of bitter communalism. Elsewhere I have suggested a re-amalgamation of the North-West Frontier Province with the Punjab, a fusion which many on the frontier would welcome.

<sup>1</sup> See *Report on the Constitutional Problem in India*, Part III, Chapter X. R. Coupland.

By drawing in Sind and Baluchistan without reference to League dictatorship, on ethnological and economic grounds a union could be achieved in which the Sikhs would be far more likely to acquiesce than in an externally imposed constitution based on exclusive Moslem nationhood. With the port of Karachi at its disposal to handle the Punjab wheat and cotton export trade and with the great irrigation projects, which both the Punjab and Sind<sup>1</sup> contemplate, such an amalgamation is a practical economic proposition.

The other accepted League zone is Bang-i-Islam or Bengal and Assam. Here is a subject of high controversy. Mr. Edward Thompson who knows Bengal well has drawn attention to the chaos that may ensue if an attempt is made to establish a Moslem State in Bengal. The two communities are numerically almost evenly balanced and the Hindu culture of Bengal is a matter of pride to Hindu India, who would regard the severance of the Province from the motherland as a challenge to its very existence. The city of Calcutta, the heart of Bengal, claims a large Hindu majority and Calcutta University, whether by merit or exclusion, is predominantly Hindu.<sup>2</sup> When the Gandhi-Jinnah conversations took place in 1944 Mr. Thompson aptly drew attention to the curious anomaly under which a Moslem from Karachi and a Hindu from Gujerat presumed to settle the fate of 28 million Bengalis and 24 million Punjabis. I cannot speak for Bengal, but I doubt if either Mr. Jinnah or Mr. Gandhi have ever halted for more than a few hours in a Punjab village.

These, then, are the main limbs of Pakistan and in neither of them has the desire for articulation, to operate the body, yet been expressed. One enthusiast has gone so far as to suggest a corridor to seal the unity between them. After Europe's experience of corridors we can hardly take this suggestion seriously.

The demarcation of other suggested zones would tax diplomacy to the full. One plan envisages a central zone based on Delhi and Lucknow.<sup>3</sup> Included is an interesting feature involving the transfer of populations in order to concentrate Moslems from the eastern United Provinces in the zone. The transfer of populations is a new conception in international relations. It was achieved in Europe by the Germans and to a lesser extent by the Italians in North Africa with some considerable success. But such transfers were effected by highly efficient administrative staffs on a docile and well-disciplined people using a fully developed railway and road transport system. Even so, there must have been many shattered hopes and much unhappiness. We may disapprove of such proposals. But if, at the time, the League produces a detailed practical scheme it may need to be considered seriously. More con-

<sup>1</sup> Sind post-war plans include the Upper and Lower Sind barrage schemes which will bring a million acres under cultivation.

<sup>2</sup> Many Moslems claim that this great institution has become a Hindu monopoly. Recently a resolution to fix Moslem and Hindu percentages for administrative posts was defeated on the grounds that communalism should not figure in a University. Moslems described this as a Hindu "stunt."

<sup>3</sup> Plan of Dr. S. A. Latif of Osmania University, Hyderabad.

roversial than a population transfer is the question of the disposal of Delhi, which has now come to be regarded as the one tangible and material symbol of unity. If it is to revert to the status of a capital of a minor Moslem State, there will rightly be an outcry of indignation from every other element in the country.

The fourth and last zone which has figured as a Pakistan area is Usmanistan or the present State of Hyderabad. Hyderabad is a Hindu State ruled by a Moslem dynasty; and it is pertinent to ask, if Usmanistan is to receive some kind of status within the Pakistan family, how the State of Kashmir which has a Moslem population with a Hindu ruler can be expected to be a willing partner in the amalgamation which is to form the North-West zone? The immediate solution which occurs to the bewildered public is that the rulers of Kashmir and Hyderabad should exchange States and Hyderabad be absorbed in Hindustan! It would seem no stranger a solution than one involving large transfers of population.

The League's attitude to the war has been ambiguous. In October 1940 the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, made a statement of policy. The goal of Dominion Status was reaffirmed with the additional qualification that if in the meanwhile Indian opinion wished to express any particular views modification of the federal portion of the 1935 Act after the war would certainly be considered. For the closer association of all political elements with the prosecution of the war it was proposed to set up a fully representative consultative group. The League rejected these proposals in so far as they wished the federal Constitution to be completely scrapped. In other respects their attitude remained negative.

In the Provinces, however, League ministries gave the prosecution of the war varying degrees of support, the Punjab, true to its traditions, leading the way with the full application of all its resources and manpower. A fair gauge of the measure of a party's support was the comprehensive organization, "The National War Front," which claimed speakers of all denominations on its platform. The League forbade its members to take part in National War Front activities, where such activities were controlled by parties which excluded it from the governmental machinery. But such limitations were not pressed home, for there were, and still are, far too many Moslem Leaguers with close family associations in service in the Defence Forces. In the Punjab, a prominent Leaguer, Malik Mumtaz Daulatana, took upon himself the task of vindicating the League's rather vague loyalties; and in doing so he made it clear in a number of articles to the Press that in an individual capacity there was nothing to prevent a member from following his own inclination.

To local reactions the central authority has given neither encouragement nor disapproval. As time went by, it seemed clear that Mr. Jinnah's hope was that the Government would turn to the League with an appeal for co-operation in return for a more sympathetic recognition of the principle of partition. At an address to students in 1943 at which I was present he used words to the effect that, if the Government could

not obtain the co-operation of 100 per cent of the parties, it was surely up to them to enlist the services of the 90 per cent who were ready to help. The gossip at the time was that had the Qaid-i-Azam<sup>1</sup> been offered a portfolio on the Executive Council, he would have accepted it. Rightly or wrongly, it appeared a part of the policy of the Government not to seek openly the co-operation of the League, so long as the great rival organization was not in a position for inclusion in an All-India Cabinet. It would undoubtedly have strengthened the hand of the League in future negotiations if they could have taken an official share in the prosecution of the war by participation in the Central Executive.

If Pakistan is to be interpreted in its literal meaning a link-up with nations over the northern passes should follow. It might logically take the form of an extension of the existing pact of 1937 which already covers Turkey, Iraq, Persia and Afghanistan for their mutual security. This proposition has been canvassed in some quarters in support of the contention that such an alliance would obviate the necessity for the maintenance of large armed forces. It is difficult to see where an understanding of this nature would end; and although it is in harmony with the traditional dream of complete Islamic ideology it is hardly reconcilable with a continued understanding with the British Commonwealth. In many discussions with Moslem gentlemen in the Punjab, I never heard this wider League of Moslem nations considered seriously in application to the North-West of India; and it is perhaps appropriate here to close down our speculation with emphasis on a reasonable supposition that it is ultimately for those gentlemen, and for them alone, to say what exactly they do want. It may be that the post-war readjustments of Europe will carry their lesson, for all over the world the experience of small units surely is that only in amalgamation lies the hope of both economic and national survival.

## CHAPTER V

### THE SIKHS

IN MUCH THE SAME WAY AS LUTHER BROKE AWAY FROM THE CATHOLIC Church, so, in about the year A.D. 1500, a certain Nanak, tired of the domination of Brahman priesthood and the propitiation of many gods, collected his followers to the worship of the one God and preached escape from what he regarded as idolatry. This much he had in common with that other rebel from Brahmanism, Gautama Buddha, of many centuries before. But there similarity ended, for, whereas Buddha preached withdrawal from the world, Nanak laid the foundations of a movement which was to develop into a "church militant" more compact and totalitarian within its small scope than any religious community which has yet stirred history. The paradox is that while the Sikh com-

<sup>1</sup> "Qaid-i-Azam" means "mighty ruler." Title conferred on Mr. Jinnah by his followers.

munity has bitter lingering memories of many years of Moslem persecution, in essence, form, and religious philosophy they are far nearer their traditional enemies of Islam than they are to the Hindu pantheon from which they sprang. One cannot believe that Nanak ever intended the movement which he founded to develop in the militant way in which it took shape, for he was essentially a man of peace and tolerance.

Nanak, a Khatri,<sup>1</sup> was born near Lahore in 1469. In his whole philosophical approach to the situation of his time he seems to have been a prophet in the wilderness, a man out of his era with the greater intuition of St. Paul. He lived, as the Sikhs live to-day, in the border country where at that time Hindu and Moslem interests were joining issue. In his wisdom he sought a solution not through the coils of political expediency but in the attempt to create a community which would be a synthesis of all which was best in both Hindu and Moslem. He neither condemned nor attacked. He was gentle, persuasive and enlightened. History has not yet done justice to this great religious leader of men. Given the title of "Guru"<sup>2</sup> by his followers, he initiated a chain of leaders, some of whom were men of great singleness of purpose and ability, but none of whom quite achieved the lofty character of the founder.

The fourth Guru, Ram Das, laid the foundations of the temple at Amritsar which has since become the focus of the Sikh religion and which we know to-day as "The Golden Temple." For many years the precincts of the temple were hardly worthy of the spiritual centre of a great community; but before I left India I saw plans for its enlargement which will make it as spacious a place of worship as any in the country. Outside the temple an alms house dispenses continuous free meals to men and women of all denominations, a happy expression of religious charity of which thousands of poor pilgrims take advantage. I have frequently suggested to Sikh leaders that they should extend their charity to do something to improve the appalling local conditions of squalor in the bazaar approaches to the temple. There are now ample funds and such expenditure would be a gesture of practical benefit to the community.

It was left to the son of Guru Ram Das, Guru Arjan, to organize his disciples and place the religion on a sound basis of administration. Under him Amritsar came to be regarded as the centre of the faith. He traded and raised funds and organized. Finally, he collected all the teachings of past Gurus and recorded and tabulated them into one common Scripture which he bequeathed as the doctrine for the future. To-day a feature of this severe yet rational monotheism is that the centre of worship is the book<sup>3</sup> and its teaching; and the priest is but the vehicle of the message of the book.

Throughout the latter half of the eighteenth century, Sikh history is the story of the struggle for survival in face of ruthless persecution at

<sup>1</sup> A trading caste of Kshatriya origin.

<sup>2</sup> The ten Sikh Gurus are set out in Appendix III.

<sup>3</sup> Referred to always as the "Gurth Sahib."

the hands of such men as Aurangzeb and Ahmad Shah. The former executed the ninth Guru, Tej Bahadur, while the latter laid waste the Golden Temple. It was in this atmosphere of religious intolerance and bloodshed that the tenth and last Guru, Govind Singh, developed that martial Cromwellian spirit by which, so far from being liquidated through persecution, the community went from strength to strength. He it was who initiated the many functions of ritual which have given Sikh ceremony its markedly individual character. Officers of the Indian Army who serve with Sikh units have in the past come to know Sikh religious practice intimately. For those who may yet be concerned with Sikhs either in the Army or the administration a brief summary of the more prominent features may be useful.

First there is the "pahul" or ritual of baptism, usually performed at the age of about 14. No man carries the title of "Singh" with his name until he has taken the pahul initiation. This may be performed by mass methods in the manner of our own Baptists, boys and girls being baptized together. The ceremony is simple and consists mainly in the drinking of a mixture of sugar and water<sup>1</sup> boiled together and stirred by the double-edged sword<sup>2</sup> which is the main symbol of the Sikh faith. The ceremony must be witnessed by five confirmed Sikhs.

The pahul ceremony originated in the time of the tenth Guru, Govind Singh, in the village of Muktesar in the Ferozepore District. The story goes that Govind demanded five disciples who should prove their devotion to the Sikh cause by the sacrifice of their lives. Five men stepped forward and offered themselves. They withdrew into a tent and in due course their heads were hurriedly displayed to an anxious public. Whether the heads were actually those of the volunteers or were in fact goats' heads is the kind of vague implication which attaches to religious legend. Tradition then relates that the disciples stepped from the tent and under the public gaze were blessed by the Guru for their devotion and baptized in the manner which has become firmly established as the pahul.

The Muktesar Gurdwara is now the scene of a spectacular annual pilgrimage which attracts many thousands from all over the southern Punjab.<sup>3</sup> Throughout the war with limited transport a host of 30 or 40 thousand were making the journey.

There is nothing very peculiar to the Sikh ceremony of marriage. It is a simple family affair and as often as not is performed in the house of the bridegroom's father, the local Granthi reading the Granth Sahib in a courtyard to an assembled gathering of friends and relations with the perambulation of the bride and bridegroom round him during the process. Usually the bridegroom first goes to the bride's house and fetches her

<sup>1</sup> "Amrit," when taken at the pahul—normally termed "paishād."

<sup>2</sup> "Kunda." The Kunda and steel quoit together form the Sikh symbol, in the same manner as Hindus have the Swastika.

<sup>3</sup> At the battle of Muktesar, Guru Govind Singh lost his mother and four sons, while thousands of Sikhs were slain. History relates that 40 of the survivors deserted. In their flight they encountered a woman, Mai Bhago, who on hearing their story presented them with bangles and told them to live like women in their homes. Thoroughly shamed, they returned to the battlefield and were slain under the leadership of Mai Bhago. It is in their memory that the annual "Maghi Mela" is held.

back, the honeymoon being celebrated in the house of the bridegroom's father. In less educated circles marriage still takes place at a disgracefully early age in spite of government legislation.

The birthdays of the leading Gurus are observed as holidays, and on such occasions all good Sikhs gather round the Granthi in the Gurdwara and sit on the floor for hours listening to Scripture reading. Few Westerners ever become acclimatized to sitting on the floor for purposes of either social or religious intercourse, and half an hour with my legs crossed and without a back support has always been enough to bring on sufficient discomfort to set my mind wandering. Nevertheless, in the Army, British officers always gladly accepted the invitations to Sikh and other festivals, leaving with a bag of cardamoms and *kurra parshad* and parting with a small present for the Gurdwara.<sup>1</sup>

The three most important occasions which are recognized as gazetted Sikh holidays by the Government are the birthdays of Gurus Nanak and Govind Singh and the martyrdom of Guru Arjan at Lahore. Loyal Sikhs observe several other festivals and Amritsar always celebrates the birthday of Guru Ram Das who founded the Golden Temple.

It was Govind Singh, the last Guru, who gave the Sikhs their five symbols<sup>2</sup> and who prescribed abstention from tobacco, a worthy precept, but one which may have led the community the more readily to enjoy their ration of country liquor.<sup>3</sup>

While Govind was in continuous trouble with the Mogul power he was also competing with movements within his own fold. Attempts to establish a priesthood were taking shape and a community now known as the "Sodhis," claiming descent from Guru Ram Das, were evolving their own practices. It was this pressure which caused Govind to revise and rewrite the Scriptures which he completed in 1696.

Govind had to see his wife and family put to death at Sirhind by the orders of Aurangzeb. He himself answered a call from Bahadur Shah, the last effective Mogul Emperor, and marched south to fight the Mahrattas, finally meeting his death at Nander in the Dekhan in 1708, a far cry from the scene of his life's labour.

This is all too brief a survey of the man who gave the Sikhs every symbol of their present strength and status. Under his leadership the democratic doctrine of the elimination of all caste and priestly domination received its confirmation. While he insisted on the absence of appointed priestly authority, he was yet shrewd enough to maintain a crude ritual

<sup>1</sup> The Sikhs dispense with the privacy of a bag for their "church collection" and all contributions are thrown on to a sheet spread out in front of the Granthi's dais.

<sup>2</sup> The five "ks":—

i. Kes—unshaven hair. Modern sophisticated Sikhs who shave and cut their hair are termed "sajhdaris," in contrast to orthodox Sikhs who are "kesdaris." Members of the ruling family of Kapurthala are sajhdaris, although it is announced that the present grandson of the Maharaja will revert to the "Kes."

ii. Kachhi—a short pair of drawers.

iii. Kanga—a comb.

iv. Kara—a steel bangle.

v. Kirpan—a small waist dagger. Originally a small emblem worn in the head-dress, it has rapidly evolved to a knife about 18 inches long.

<sup>3</sup> The Sikh drinks but does not smoke. The Moslem smokes but does not drink.



in keeping with the stern militarism which held the Sikhs together in a fanatical exaltation through all tribulation.

It must not be supposed that the Sikhs were above retaliation. After Govind's death, under the leadership of Banda, there was a terrible vengeance in the eastern Punjab, and Sirhind was occupied by the Sikhs after the defeat of the Mogul Governor in an orgy of blood, neither men nor women being spared.

I have picked on only a few of the salient features of Sikhism with the object of indicating something of the nature of the stern ritual in which the Sikhs take unbounded pride. These are the things which they are never tired of impressing on Englishmen who show any interest in their affairs. In the Army in particular officers find that Sikhs delight in unfolding the details of their religious practice. In the Army, too, fortunately, there has been that good-humoured discipline which allows the various communities, when knit together in a unit, each to follow their religious custom to their hearts' content in frank and friendly competition.

In the sixteenth century democratic institutions hardly appealed to the Rajputs, and so it was that the Sikhs in their expansion absorbed the Jats of the central Punjab and the sturdy Jat agriculturist became the backbone of the Sikh nation.

In the latter half of the eighteenth century Sikh fortunes were in a state of constant fluctuation. The disintegrating Mogul Empire, finally crushed by Nadir Shah in 1759, gave them an opportunity for consolidation, which in turn led to defeat at the hands of Ahmad Shah in 1761. Later again their fortunes revived and Ahmad Shah's great gun "Zamzamah," which now stands outside the Lahore museum, came to be regarded as the symbol of Sikh victory.

There followed a period of confusion and drift. Leadership was again required to control the expanding Sikh virility and leadership was promptly found. Zaman Shah, the grandson of Ahmad Shah, had given the governorship of Lahore to one Ranjit Singh, the head of the Sukarcharia League.<sup>1</sup> "Mean in appearance, his face pock-marked and one eye closed by the ravages of smallpox, he was yet a splendid horseman, a bold leader, a cool unscrupulous schemer, and an unerring judge of character."<sup>2</sup>

Under Ranjit Singh the Punjab received a rough and ready homogeneity, and the twelve independent autocratic Leagues, into which the nation had divided, were amalgamated. But it should not be supposed that the country in any way enjoyed security of either life or land tenure. Though modern writers tend to write down, even to deplore, the imposition of Western administration, a fair statement of conditions one hundred years ago is probably recorded in the following passage :—

"A fortified village, surrounded by a wall and entered by gates with a portcullis, could give sufficient trouble to a Mogul, Afghan,

<sup>1</sup> One of the twelve Leagues under Sikh rulers into which the country had split.

<sup>2</sup> *The Land of the Five Rivers*, Chapter IV. By H. K. Trevaskis, I.C.S.

or Sikh revenue collector to render him reasonable. It was more worth his while to compound for an equitable amount of revenue than to be put to the expense and inconvenience of attacking and destroying the village."<sup>1</sup>

Ranjit Singh died in 1839 and there followed an undignified scramble for power. His son and grandson died in quick succession, and eventually the young Dulip Singh, a putative son of Ranjit Singh, was appointed to the Gadi with a council of regency under Sir Henry Lawrence.

Sikh ambitions, fanned by the mother of Dulip Singh, led to trouble on the eastern Punjab frontier where the British Government had staked its control as far up as the river Sutlej. The Sikhs broke across the river and there followed the First Sikh War which was settled at Sobraon in 1846 with the consequent British annexation of the Jullundur Doab. In 1848 our interests again clashed, this time in the southern Punjab, at Multan, and it was not until 1849, after the crowning victory of Gujerat, that a permanent peace was established.

The interest of the Sikh wars lies not in the caprices of fortune in a dozen or so battles, but in the fact that the Bengal Army of the East India Company, with the support of the Queen's troops, with difficulty defeated as brave and worthy a foe as it had yet been called upon to face. For our purpose their modern significance is that ever since 1849, in spite of political disagreement, there has been bred through those battles a mutual respect which has survived periodical political antagonism. To-day the necessities of the times demand an open mind and the Sikh community are looking around and watching events ready for the role of either friend or foe. But they would be very reluctant indeed to force any situation which would bring them as a community into conflict with British power, and in recent years the bonds of friendship have been confirmed through two dreary world wars.<sup>2</sup>

The Sikhs are men; and when we have had our say on some irritable attributes, we yet appreciate that we are dealing with a community of boisterous friendship with whom Englishmen sense a certain elemental affinity. Just as Sikhs take pride in their ritual, so also their leaders are in these times quick to remind the British authority of the high lights in their history, and for this reason I have touched in all too sketchy a manner on those historical landmarks to which a man such as Master Tara Singh will be frequently referring in the days to come.

Modern Sikh political history is centred round the Akali party and its endeavours always to keep the rights and interests of its community prominently before the Central and Punjab Governments.

Like the Moslems, the Sikhs were slow to develop the power of the pen and debate as a political weapon, and it was a Canadian immigration problem which may be said to have attached to the Akali party its past reputation for hostility to the established Government of the day. This reputation lingered on into modern times, although the party is now

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> The Sikh enlistment in the Army in September 1944 was about 100,000 men.

the perfectly normal expression of legitimate Sikh sentiment, while its name derives from those Akalis who were the original disciples of the warrior Guru Govind Singh.

In the early years of the present century Sikhs in large numbers sought their fortunes outside India and Canada in particular attracted their enterprise. I cannot attempt a detailed account of the factors which dictated subsequent events. It is sufficient to recall that Canada placed certain restrictions on immigration and that the Canadian Sikhs to voice their grievances started a newspaper, *Ghadar*, copies of which found their way back to India in large numbers from 1911 onwards. In 1914 the ship *Komagatu Maru* berthed at Calcutta with 300 emigrants who had not been allowed to land in Canada. Some of these were men of fanatical temper and they undoubtedly had fertile material when it came to spreading their story in the Punjab. But divided loyalties in the Punjab, with its traditional preparations for war under way, could not be countenanced and stern measures were taken.

For the duration of the war the seeds of a revolutionary movement, therefore, lay dormant; but by the time that Mr. Gandhii visited the Punjab in 1919 the ground was ready for Congress co-operation and open opposition to Government. While political agitation was thus taking shape, simultaneously legitimate religious agitation was finding expression in an attack on the management of the Gurdwaras. Thus against a dual background of politics and religion the Akali party grew to recognition as the embodiment of the Sikh body politic. Simultaneously many Sikh soldiers were being discharged from the Army and there was fertile soil for the seed of that brand of communalism which is an attribute of the Sikhs.

The Gurdwaras had hitherto been under the control of the Mahants, many of whom were not even Sikhs. Some of these enjoyed large incomes and lands which were only nominally the property of the Gurdwaras. Their moral standards were also not above reproach. The Punjab Government were sympathetic to reform but not at the expense of allowing Akali jathas to take the law into their own hands and forcibly eject the Mahants.

At this stage we should introduce Master Tara Singh, the Sikh leader, for it was during this period that he came into prominence as the champion of Sikh political thought. Tara Singh was born in 1885 of a Khatri Hindu family near Mandra in the Rawal Pindi District and was given the name of Nanak Chand. The simplicity of the village Gurdwara attracted him and he accordingly took *amrit* along with a batch of youths and became immediately absorbed in the sterner tightly disciplined aspect of Sikhism, adopting the name of Tara Singh. There is a tendency in all political process for men of voluntary adoption of another community to follow their new vocation with a far greater enthusiasm than those of established faith. In current history we recall that de Valera is hardly a typical Irishman and that Hitler was an Austrian.

Tara Singh rapidly absorbed the Sikh mode of life and propagated

Sikhism with a sturdy fanaticism and ability.<sup>1</sup> He took his Degree from the Khalsa College, Amritsar, in 1907 and later obtained an appointment as headmaster of the new Khalsa High School at Lyallpur, where he quickly established himself as a forceful disciplinarian. In his youth he had shown an aptitude for sport and under his guidance the Lyallpur School gained a reputation as a Spartan Sikh institution. To the public its headmaster became known as "Master Tara Singh." For several years life was comparatively uneventful and he went from one school to another always preaching the severe austerity of the religion of his adoption and insisting on the rigid observance of all Sikh ritual.

In 1921 the mismanagement of the Gurdwaras was coming into prominence.<sup>2</sup> The Gurdwara at Nankana near Lahore was among the first to receive the attention of the newly formed Akali party and Master Tara Singh had by now forsaken his teaching and accepted the mantle of Gurdwara reform with its dangerous responsibilities. Nankana was only one of a series of trials of strength between the Mahants and the Akali *jathas*, and it is hardly to our purpose to follow in detail the events which led to a final settlement, events which twice found Master Tara Singh in prison. It was difficult sometimes to distinguish where legitimate agitation for Gurdwara reform ended and unreasoned opposition to Government began. Where the risk of the latter was suspected, such things as the carrying of long kirpans and hand weapons<sup>3</sup> and the organization of *jathas* (not for missionary reform but for the menace of uncontrolled mob expression) could not be permitted.

It was in such ways that the Akali agitation sometimes went hopelessly astray, and a particular example of misplaced zeal was their attempt to support a tottering, cruel and rotten administration in the Sikh State of Nabha in 1923. Once again Master Tara Singh was involved and a further term of imprisonment resulted. This time the S.G.P.C., formed to administer the Gurdwaras, and its sister institution the Shiromani Akali Dal<sup>3</sup> were declared unlawful associations.

Matters deteriorated, and in 1924 my father, who then held the Northern Army Command, was appointed by the Viceroy, Lord Reading, to effect a settlement. It was hoped that with his knowledge and sympathy for Sikhs a settlement would be achieved. Sikh leaders have since confided to me that they would have been wise to accept the terms which were then postulated. Negotiations broke down over the quite impossible demand that all Sikh prisoners in jails, whatever their offence, should be released. Government was prepared to sanction the release of those undergoing imprisonment for Gurdwara offences, but the greater demand had little sense and of course could not be considered. Later, a settlement less favourable to the Sikhs was finally achieved and the

<sup>1</sup> Guru Govind Singh himself was a converted Hindu born at Patna in Bihar.

<sup>2</sup> Previously in 1920, anticipating Gurdwara reform, the Sikhs had already set up their own machinery, in the form of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (Society for Gurdwara protection) known always as the S.G.P.C.

<sup>3</sup> The secular equivalent of the S.G.P.C.

Gurdwara Act of 1925 came into force, since when there has been little further controversy.

To the mind for which religion is not so much the custodian of the soul as of the material welfare of a co-religionist, it is inevitable that such custody should assume a form in which religion and politics are intricately welded in an indivisible unity. When also any adulation of priesthood is regarded as taboo, the affairs of a community accepting such a plan of life will come under the charge of men who should, through those circumstances, show ability of a complex nature. In contrast to these expectations the character of Master Tara Singh has always seemed to me an extremely simple one. On the several occasions on which we have met I have been impressed first by his complete freedom from all material attachment. We who live in the Western world of want are apt to laugh at the spectacle of a leader of men who is content with four bare walls and a charpoy. May not the truth possibly lie in a reversal of these conceptions and the right to smile be with those who have never worried over the good things of life, without which I myself would be lost? At least we must refrain from sarcasm. Secondly, I have found him a man of obstinate courage in propagating every interest of his community to the exclusion of those of his neighbours. It may be a narrow outlook untempered by any ability to read the broad lessons of history or the laws of mankind as a whole. Yet it differs little from the European system of rigid national loyalties, and the Sikhs are only unfortunate in finding themselves geographically intermingled with Moslems and Hindus, so that over no substantial area can they claim an effective majority. Finally, Master Tara Singh has a gay twinkle in his eye which persists even while he may simultaneously be engaged in fierce repartee. I do not know whether this weapon is spontaneous; but I pray sincerely that he may use it freely in the controversial times which lie ahead!

If he is to be regarded as the embodiment of militant Sikhism, he has with him a counsellor in whose hands the manipulation of Sikh politics is safe. It is commonly said that Giani Kartar Singh is the brains behind the leader. The truth is that the two together are the complement of each other. Giani Kartar Singh is the leader of the Akali party in the Punjab Legislative Assembly. Like his colleague he is a man of drastically simple needs and of somewhat untidy appearance. Unlike his colleague he faces his task behind a mask of inscrutability and it takes some time in conversation before one is aware that he is first and foremost an extremely astute politician.

While there are many other voices in prominence and while there is also a vociferous dissentient element led by Baba Kharak Singh, it is mainly from these two men that one may expect future Sikh demands to be framed. In order to understand those demands we must marshal a few facts.

The Sikh community in 1921 totalled about 3,200,000. To-day it stands at over 5,000,000. This is not only a matter of natural virility but also of conversion. Many low-caste Hindus find that in embracing

Sikhism they gain both status and social freedom.<sup>1</sup> The Sikhs are at their highest saturation in Amritsar where they constitute 40 per cent of the population. In the rural areas of the Districts of Lahore, Amritsar, Ferozepore, Jullundur and Ludhiana, Jat Sikhs predominate. As one moves further afield, Moslems, Rajputs and Jats increase, and the fewer Sikhs in the outer Punjab districts are mostly Khatri and Aroras from the towns.

The Punjab Legislative Assembly has 175 members, and in accordance with the Government of India Act, 1935, representation is on the separate electorate system, by which each community is guaranteed its quota of seats. In the Punjab Assembly there are 33 Sikh seats.<sup>2</sup>

This process of head counting, once started, has a way of spreading to all aspects of Government, and so has arisen a system by which the attempt is made to recognize communal percentages with mathematical precision in all junior government appointments either in the Central or Provincial Governments. It is a system guaranteed to drive a conscientious administrator quite frantic, and a sense of humour is required. The Akali Sikhs watch this aspect with almost fanatical interest. They have lately extended their attentions to the more important posts. Recently, for the first time, a Sikh acted as a judge of the Lahore High Court and there is now, also for the first time, a Sikh member of the Viceroy's Executive Council. With the extension of the whole idea of communal representation, such demands tend always to increase and are unfortunately never modified. Final satisfaction is never reached and communalism runs mad. Demands are based on no valid argument and the greatest good of the greatest number is a conception that one cannot say is ignored, for it has never been considered.

With the wisdom of the late Sir Fazul-i-Hussein for guidance, Sir Sikander Hayat Khan, in forming his ministry after the elections of 1937, confirmed the "Unionist" tradition and formed his coalition Cabinet of four Moslems, two Hindus and one Sikh. In spite of the recent efforts of the Moslem League to change the character of the Ministry, that tradition still stands.<sup>3</sup>

These then are the main features which govern present Sikh political endeavour. With a Sikh in the Ministry to watch their interests it was felt that the time was ripe for some kind of declared agreement guaranteeing Sikh interests. The Army certainly disliked the ambiguity of

<sup>1</sup> Sikhism itself is however by no means free of caste prejudice in spite of democratic professions. Mazhabi and Lobhana Sikhs might be regarded as the scheduled castes of the Sikhs, a position which with their growing confidence through wide Army enlistment they are now prepared to challenge. It was once my lot to persuade Jat Sikhs in a village to allow a Mazhabi Indian officer, home on leave, permission to use their well! Lobhana Sikhs have always been enlisted as transport drivers and Mazhabis were freely taken as Pioneers.

<sup>2</sup> Sikh candidates can of course contest a Sikh constituency under any party development within their community. Hitherto in Sikh constituencies at by-elections straight fights have developed between Akalis and Communists.

<sup>3</sup> Had the League been successful, the Moslem members would have had to reverse their loyalties, placing the League first and the Province second. For a full account of these events, see Chapter VI.

much misunderstanding between the Sikh leaders and the Ministry, since internal quarrels obviously reacted adversely on recruiting and the Punjab war effort. Unobtrusively, therefore, an organization known as "Civil Liaison," under the Adjutant-General, played its part, and one officer particularly, Lt.-Colonel M. Kilroy, with intimate knowledge of Sikhs, successfully used his influence. An agreement, the Sikander-Baldev Pact, was negotiated between the Premier and Sardar Baldev Singh, the Sikh Minister of Public Works. Briefly, the terms included clauses covering the teaching of Gurmukhi in schools, facilities for *Jhatka* meat in government institutions such as jails, and Sikh representation in government services.

In November 1943 I had a long conversation with Giani Kartar Singh who had just returned to the Punjab from an interview with Mr. Jinnah. Their talk must have been stimulating, for here were two hard bargainers feeling their way for the opening moves of the adjustment and counter-adjustment of future claims.

It will here be as well to reiterate in its simplest terms the Sikh claim. Briefly, it states that if the Moslem demand for a Pakistan area ever materializes, the Sikhs will immediately stake a counter-claim for a State to be known as "Azad Punjab," covering the Districts where Sikhs are at their greatest saturation.

I understood from Giani Kartar Singh that the Moslem leader was not then inclined to take this proposal too seriously and was more concerned to elucidate the conditions on which the Akali Sikhs would support a Punjab Moslem League Ministry. The impression was that there was a general tendency to bargain and that concessions to Sikhs, such as their increased representation in a Pakistan Government with a general all-round extension and an improvement on the existing terms of the Sikander-Baldev Pact, were mooted in return for assistance in the establishment of Pakistan. It was clear that the Giani had in no way committed himself to any agreement or even opinion, and so far as decisions are concerned the Sikhs still continue to keep an entirely open mind.

Subsequent to this talk, I met both Master Tara Singh and Giani Kartar Singh on several occasions, as a result of which one can build up a fairly accurate picture of their case. In speaking of that case I particularly emphasize that I believe them to be misguided in their present distrust of the Punjab Ministry. In regard to personalities Master Tara Singh gave me the impression when I last saw him that he had little fault to find with the personal attitude of the Premier, Malik Khizar Hayat,<sup>1</sup> to the Sikh leaders. This indeed was a great improvement on previous relationships when it had been impossible to bring Sir Sikander Hayat Khan and the Sikh leader into the same room together. It is, therefore, a thousand pities that the Sikh leaders cannot spontaneously put behind them an obsession of their ill-treatment at the hands of the present Punjab Unionist Ministry, for it is certain that they would receive far

<sup>1</sup> Lt.-Colonel Malik Khizar Hayat Khan. Son of the late Malik Sir Umar Hayat Khan. Head of the Moslem clan of Tiwanas in the western Punjab.

less consideration from a full-blooded League Government, if such a Cabinet ever comes to be established. Passing promises and political blackmail might bring the two elements to a temporary alliance. But mutual distrust would eventually be yet more bitter and the Sikhs would find themselves forced into measures of violence as contrasted with the present situation, in which, fortunately, methods of controlled negotiation are still recognized.

Master Tara Singh is highly sensitive to any move however trivial which might be interpreted as a personal slight, and the rest of the Akalis take their lead from him. So long as there is British advice at hand both to the Ministers and Sikhs, such advice will continue to be sought and welcomed and all will be well. But if and when that advice is no longer available—and I emphasize that in the Punjab it is freely and frankly sought—then in the hands of rank communalists on both sides order would collapse.

If I cannot follow Sikh leadership in its present supersensitive consciousness of alleged Moslem aggressive domination, I confess that in their demand for "Azad Punjab" under certain conditions they appear to have an unassailable case. Once a principle is recognized for All-India, in common justice it must surely be conceded on lower levels wherever it may with reason be demanded. I have no idea of official intention or opinion. This is a personal view and there may be convincing reasons for alternative solutions. But I have yet to be convinced of their validity or of the means of enforcing an unwilling martial minority to accept a verdict which would place them permanently under a Moslem Government in Lahore. Their suspicions may be, and probably are, without real foundation. But we may have to face a situation which recognizes that it is impossible to persuade them so.

Identically the same arguments which Mr. Jinnah has used to support the case for Pakistan are now advanced by the Sikhs in their Azad Punjab demand. We were told that during their provincial term of office Congress Governments flouted Moslem opinion and were intent on crushing Moslem education and culture. We are told exactly the same things by the Sikh leaders with reference to the Punjab Unionist Ministry. While conceding that they have a Sikh Minister to watch their interests, the Sikh attitude in general is that since the provincial elections in 1937 the Sikhs have lost ground in every aspect of public life. In eight years of provincial autonomy the Sikhs have suffered their language and their culture to be attacked, while Sikh representation in the provincial services is being slowly but surely undermined. Contrast this, they say, with the previous 88 years of British rule, during which they were treated as a community in accordance with their status and tradition. These are the present-day views of Master Tara Singh who has twice been locked up by British authority. It is a very different story to that of the nineteen-twenties.

Having considered these matters fully, the Akalis conclude that only in their own State will they be free to develop their own culture and institutions if British authority is withdrawn. This conception, which



first found expression in the Sikh deputation's letter to Sir Stafford Cripps,<sup>1</sup> has now hardened into a concrete demand. Unlike Mr. Jinnah they are prepared to elaborate their plan in some detail.

Azad Punjab would include the Districts of Ludhiana, Ferozepore, Jullundur, Hoshiarpur, Amritsar and Lahore, the Rupar and Kharar tehsils of Ambala, the Batala and Gurdaspur tehsils of Gurdaspur and certain other tehsils of the Sialkot, Gujranwala and Sheikhapura Districts, and land in the Lyallpur District. This is a large slice of the Punjab. Previously I had thought that Lahore would not be included in the demand and that the western boundary would run roughly down the left bank of the River Ravi, by-passing the Punjab capital. But geographical demands tend to expand just as any other demands. The Sikhs eagerly recall that Ranjit Singh held his Court at Lahore, that Guru Arjan died there in prison at the hands of Jehangir, and, more recently, that they established the site at Shahidganj as a Gurdwara in opposition to a Moslem counterclaim for the site as a mosque.

Walking through the streets of Lahore to-day, it is quite impossible to visualize Lahore as the exclusive property of any one community. Moslem faces predominate, but there are Rajputs, Sikhs, Brahmans, Jats, banias, and untouchables. Moslems, if pressed, could equally claim historical attachment,<sup>2</sup> and if necessary would do so.

Amritsar would be a far more logical centre for such a State although the country between Amritsar and Lahore has no feature which suggests any excuse for a frontier. The Sikhs would be wise to recognize existing conditions and leave the past as a matter for pride rather than of opportunity.

In the area as above defined, the Sikhs state that they already furnish about 90 lakhs of the land revenue as compared with 70 lakhs from the other communities, and that of the 3,700,000 Sikhs in the Punjab, nearly 3,000,000 would be within Azad Punjab. For many years to come such a State could only be administered under coalition arrangements. On the 1941 census the population would be 40 per cent Moslem, 40 per cent Hindu and 20 per cent Sikh. The Sikhs would, therefore, be the balancing element, their services being sought by both the other communities; a situation, from their point of view, not without its material attraction.

It was clear to me that the hopes of Sikh leaders were that a new State would attract the return of Sikhs from outside the Punjab. This together with the tendency to natural increase would, within a period of 15 years, bring the Sikhs within grasp of a working majority and the formation of a solid Sikh national home. Furthermore, possibly with the German precedent in mind, they are prepared to attempt population transfer on a considerable scale, exchanging Sikhs from the Rawal Pindi and Jhelum Divisions for Moslems in the Jullundur Doab.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix III.

<sup>2</sup> The great Badshahi Mosque built for Aurangzeb and the Shalamar gardens laid out by Shah Jehan are but two of many Moslem monuments.

<sup>3</sup> In this area there are occasional groups of Moslem villages in tehsils which are predominantly Jat Sikh.

This is the manner in which the minds of Master Tara Singh and his group are working; and at this stage it is not possible to criticize such sweeping readjustments with intelligence. However embarrassing and irritating the Sikh claim may appear, it is but the natural sequence of the greater Moslem demand. Moreover, in one respect, it has better logic than that demand, in that the Sikh ambitions at least spring from the heart of the country affected and are unaffected by influences imposed from outside. Too well has the world come to realize the epidemical nature of that illusive panacea, "self-determination" !

It might be argued that it is profitless and even harmful to discuss highly controversial and hypothetical changes; that to give them publicity is but to encourage rather than alleviate communal tension, and increase the difficulties of the existing administration. Personally I have never quite followed that line of thought which seeks to keep everything underground. To me it savours not only of postponing the evil day but also of handing on the baby to someone else. A free and frank exchange of opinion at all times by personal contact is surely the more rational method of effecting political settlement. If, from my contacts, I feel that Sikh leaders are formulating certain demands or thinking in certain communal channels, it is surely right that all concerned should share the knowledge. It is in the perpetual smothering and isolation of opinion that dangerous situations are built up.

My advice to Sikh leaders would always be that, avoiding truculence, they would be well advised to put all their cards on the table and make a point of frequent personal contact with the Punjab Ministry. It is all a matter of pride. Master Tara Singh would regard it as unbecoming to his status as the Sikh leader to seek interviews with Ministers. I would ask him to reflect whether it does not need a deeper moral courage to take his grievances direct to the Punjab Premier, rather than to remain aloof in defence of his dignity.

As the outline of the Azad Punjab plan unfolded, I was naturally curious to know in what manner its authors saw it fitting into the remaining pieces of the puzzle. As I understand it, the demand is to remain whether Pakistan materializes or not. In the event, therefore, of a newly elected Punjab Ministry repudiating Pakistan, the present intention is, I gathered, still to press for the new State. There was only one condition on which Master Tara Singh would be prepared to join company with Pakistan. If the Sikhs were given the same representation, 50 per cent, in a Pakistan Government as Mr. Jinnah had claimed for the Moslems in a Central Government, they would be ready to merge their claims into those of the larger State.

But it is more than possible that if the Punjab were finally to denounce Pakistan, the Sikh leaders would reconsider their whole position and fall into line re-establishing full co-operation with the Ministry. It is on such occasions, when decisions hang in the balance, that the British advice must play its part.

One of my last questions of the Sikh leader was to sound his general sentiments in regard to the British connection. It seemed to me that

he and his colleagues had hardly reached the point of studied consideration of the great issues at stake. But one thing was certain; which was that they would welcome continued association with the British Commonwealth.<sup>1</sup> The buffer State—for that is what it would be, placed between Pakistan and Hindustan—would still seek a Dominion status within the British plan, whether the rest of India was partitioned or united.

How all this might be effected, how defence adjustments and railways and Customs and a hundred other difficulties were to be met, are perhaps matters too complex for useful conjecture. Perhaps, too, the considerable remaining elements in Azad Punjab would need no small amount of coaxing to launch out as a young constitutional State. When political decisions are taken, other adjustments have a habit of following suit. But I would not envy the task of those who might have the business of tidying it all up.

At no time was Sikh temper more freely expressed than in August 1944 after the announcement of the Rajagopalacharia "formula." This was the signal for an outburst of indignation. It was certainly not very tactful to make no reference to the minority community and the result was that Master Tara Singh was recalled to leadership from a political retirement into which he had retreated some months previously.<sup>2</sup> As it stood, the formula appeared to divide the Sikhs into two ineffective minorities, and meetings were held in which the whole Pakistan conception together with Mr. Gandhi and the Congress were abused with thorough freedom. In particular, Mr. Gandhi's plea that he represented only himself and not the Congress was loudly derided.<sup>3</sup> In 1927 the Congress had held its annual session at Lahore and a resolution had been passed stating that no communal settlement would be acceptable to the Congress which did not satisfy the Sikh community. This was now quoted as indicating the vacillation of Mr. Gandhi.

In the spate of oratory which followed, angry epithets were tempered by moderation from several quarters and Sardar Bahadur Ujjal Singh in particular, while fully supporting the stand of his community, advocated the avoidance of "preposterous and impossible" demands. An original appeal came from that delightful enthusiast, Sardar Kartar Singh Diwana. The Diwana Sahib, an ardent Akali, is also the cheerful and energetic Secretary of the Khalsa Defence of India League,<sup>4</sup> an

<sup>1</sup> The following extract from a speech explains the Sikh attitude so far as they are prepared to give it publicity. "We do not wish to live either under Moslem or Hindu rule. But our countrymen are anxious to create a position in which they may establish their rule under the protection of British bayonets. It will be a calamity for us if the British agree to become the tools of this tyranny."—M. Tara Singh. Amritsar. 10th August, 1944.

<sup>2</sup> "If the Panth wishes, I shall devote myself solely to opposition to the present formula, which throws the Sikh community into permanent serfdom and slavery."—M. Tara Singh. Amritsar. 3rd August, 1944.

<sup>3</sup> "If his past utterances are no bar to his present activities, his present promises and settlements will certainly be no hindrance to his future change of front."—M. Tara Singh. Amritsar. 10th August, 1944.

<sup>4</sup> This organization was formed with the patronage and assistance of the Maharaja of Patiala to encourage Sikh recruitment and keep the war constantly before the Sikh community. For many months its propaganda vans have toured the rural areas.

organization aiming at maintaining the Sikh war effort at high pressure. His "formula" protest took the form of pressing for the immediate enlistment of 100,000 Sikhs in the Army! Among my more intimate Sikh friendships I shall always happily recall the exuberance of Kartar Singh Diwana and the magnificent oranges from his fruit farm at Lyallpur.

Reference has been made to dissentient voices within the Akali fold. Under the auspices of the Central Akali Dal,<sup>1</sup> Sardar Kharak Singh leads a group which still thinks in terms of a Congress-Akali alliance. The unity of India is to him an issue of equal importance with that of the Sikhs. Master Tara Singh is inclined to hold the minority group of little account. Yet I fancy he keeps a close eye on their progress. Sikhs further afield in the North-West Punjab have by no means supported the Azad Punjab scheme, and in the Rawal Pindi District there is a formidable opposition group with which the accredited leaders have at times had a rough passage. In very general terms it might be said that Sikhs of the Gujranwala District and further to the west are for the preservation of present boundaries; and the unity of India is of greater political significance to them than a problematical Sikh State in which they would not be included. But local loyalties are constantly undergoing exchange and fresh situations may well have developed since this was written.

In the constant jockeying for position among groups the relations of the Sikhs and the Hindu Mahasabha have failed to harden into the alliance which we might have expected. Mahasabha leaders frequently remind the Sikhs that they were born of Hindu India; and there are, of course, many more conversions to Sikhism from the Hindus than from Moslems.

Speaking recently in the Punjab Dr. S. P. Mukherjee, the Mahasabha President, said:

"I have always felt the need for complete understanding between the Sikhs and Hindus in the Punjab. The menace of Pakistan strikes at the root of our national existence in the Provinces where Hindus and Sikhs are in a minority. It is obvious the situation may become grave if there is disunity between them at this critical juncture in the history of their Province. I hope the provincial Hindu Sabha would do everything possible to unite these two communities and also to strengthen its relationship with those patriotic Moslems in the Punjab who believe in the unity and integrity of India."

There is a constant mild flirtation in progress with the onus of seduction on the Mahasabha.

There remains one further aspect of Sikh political aspiration. It is their constant endeavour to exercise certain controls in the Sikh States. I saw something of this friction when, in Jullundur as a Civil Liaison

<sup>1</sup> This is a rival organization to the Shiromani Akali Dal. In 1944 Baba Kharak Singh presided over the All-India Akhand Hindustan Conference at Gujranwala.

Officer, I was only a few miles away from the State of Kapurthala. The situation, though of local importance only, was of peculiar personal interest, since for many years I have known the Kapurthala family and the friendship did not begin with my generation. Though the ruling family are Ahluwalia Sikhs, yet Sikhs constitute only about 30 per cent of the State. It was Giani Kartar Singh who took upon himself the particular duty of championing Sikhism in Kapurthala and on one occasion he was about to lead a *jatha* in to take control of the State Gurdwaras. In a formidable list of demands he included the use only of *Jhatka* meat in the Palace, the education of the present grandson of the Maharaja as an orthodox *kesdari* Sikh,<sup>1</sup> a larger quota of Sikhs in junior appointments and the replacement of the Moslem Chief Minister by a Sikh at the first opportunity. Mian Abdul Aziz, the Chief Minister, whatever he may or may not have been as an administrator, was I believe as sincerely non-communal as is possible. His mode and outlook on life was that of a European and there was nothing whatsoever of religious bigotry in him. I went over the Akali grievances with him and was convinced that in their most formidable accusation, that of the numbers of Sikhs in the various State appointments, the figures submitted by the Akalis were wrong. The *jatha* was eventually abandoned and a compromise effected. But Kapurthala State enjoys the constant attention of the Sikh leaders, since the ruling family are hardly governed by the more austere Sikh practices. Their outlook is international. Following the tastes of the Maharaja they have travelled much and conversation within the family circle would be perfectly intelligible in any one of three or four languages.

In their relations with Patiala State the Sikh leaders are on more precarious ground. As the ruler of the most powerful of the Sikh States the Maharaja of Patiala enjoys a fame and commands a respect among the Sikh public which draws him constantly into many aspects of Sikh leadership. It is not often that youth, great wealth, physical perfection, and sound common sense are discovered in one with so much opportunity and power. It is certain that in any future readjustment which might be mooted in the eastern Punjab, the State of Patiala is destined to play a very prominent part. Master Tara Singh was for several years on indifferent terms with the late Maharaja, and Maharajas, as such, do not impress him. The present ruler is a man of decision and is not likely to accept dictation in any form where the internal administration of his State is concerned. The many possible developments are as yet so dim that it is not profitable to pursue them. A popular Sikh Akali leader recently in a Press interview spoke of the absorption of the six Sikh States into the contemplated State of "Azad Punjab."<sup>2</sup>

As time goes by, perhaps the Akalis would be wise to allow the future of the States in relation to the Crown and India to be first resolved, before they worry over the welfare of Sikhs within Sikh States.

<sup>1</sup> See Footnote 2 on page 61.

<sup>2</sup> The blind Akali leader, Giani Sher Singh. To the *Civil and Military Gazette*. 1st September, 1944. This much respected leader has since died.

I have tried to paint a picture of a community of 5,000,000 dispersed over about 25,000 square miles in varying saturation, intensely conscious of its religion and tradition, sometimes quick in temper and hasty of judgment, a community to which physical fitness and the profession of arms comes readily, and which is yet enterprising and successful in many aspects of industry and engineering, a people lacking in aesthetic sense and in the metaphysical philosophies; an agricultural people of rough humour which follows them even through devious intrigue, a people who have left their dead scattered over the battlefields of Italy and the African desert and the Burma jungles.

I have suggested that, should the Pakistan issue develop to reality, I believe the Sikh case for self-determination to be just. But unless and until Pakistan arrives the British influence should continue to be exerted to keep the Sikh community a contented partner in the Punjab family through their continued representation in the provincial Ministry. It is a curious arrangement by which the Sikhs look both to their Minister in the Cabinet and their religious leader at Amritsar to watch their interests. Yet it is an arrangement which works well enough. The Punjab Premier,<sup>1</sup> when challenged recently, without hesitation declared his determined intention to honour the Sikander-Baldev Pact, and Sardar Baldev Singh is scrupulously loyal to the Premier's leadership and to the Ministry.

In this much there is cause for hope. With the demobilization of perhaps 70,000 Sikh soldiers after the war other influences will enter the field. There are several Sikhs highly placed in the Defence Services who, if they care to be associated with provincial politics, might well assist a steadier coalition. Our hope is always that men who have forgotten communalism in the brotherhood of arms will perpetuate that brotherhood in the interests of the land they share.

For the present, the British endeavour will be energetically directed to encourage every aspect of that joint ownership.

## CHAPTER VI

### POLITICAL BITS AND PIECES

BY NOW WE SHOULD HAVE A PICTURE OF THE CLAIMS AND COUNTER-CLAIMS in All-India affairs of the two rival organizations, the Congress and the League. We have seen also the part which the small but virile community of Sikhs may be destined to play.

But there are other important parties and organizations which cross the stage and they must be placed in their true perspective. Inevitably, too, some bits and pieces have been left behind or have fallen by the way, so that here I am attempting to gather these together and tie them into a bundle; hardly a neat one, for time is short, and in writing of

<sup>1</sup> In the Punjab Assembly, in answer to Raja Ghazanjar Ali. March, 1944.

modern India it is a case of fitting the missing pieces in before there is a completely different puzzle.

One of these pieces is the Gandhi-Jinnah conversation of September 1944, of which I believe no complete account ever reached England. These talks resulted from the publication of Mr. C. Rajagopalacharia's formula. In brief, the author recognized the partition of India and anticipated a provisional interim National Government to work out the details after a plebiscite in the areas affected. The formula was immediately attacked from many sides, protestations coming from the Liberals, Dr. Ambedkar and the Punjab Hindus.<sup>1</sup>

The formula suffered from the fact that whereas Mr. Gandhi accepted it as a basis for negotiation Mr. Jinnah did not. Instead, the League President chose the Moslem League's resolution in Lahore in 1940<sup>2</sup> as his starting-point. Discussion therefore started to a bad get-away and the two men never at any time looked like falling in step.

Nevertheless, Mr. Rajagopalacharia could congratulate himself that he had at least got Mr. Gandhi and Mr. Jinnah together for a fortnight and that in itself was no mean achievement. At least, too, it was now shown that the contention that the British were responsible for disagreement was false, for in the lengthy correspondence published between the two the British and their part in the drama hardly received a mention.

Each of the contending parties frequently protested that he was equally ready to convert or be converted. Mr. Jinnah got in the first shot with a formidable string of questions on the meaning of various clauses in the formula. He also pleaded that it was only as a concession that he negotiated at all, since Mr. Gandhi was speaking in his individual capacity without the sanction or authority of the Congress. This was true enough, but I feel the point was much exaggerated both by Mr. Jinnah and the Press. It was obvious that if Mr. Jinnah and Mr. Gandhi could really have effected a practical agreement of compromise, with both men sincerely pledged to honour it in so far as lay in their ability, then the two great parties concerned could hardly have dared to risk repudiation. In his battery of questions Mr. Jinnah showed that if he was not prepared himself to define Pakistan in clear terms, in return he was equally determined to obtain clarity of definition in Mr. Gandhi's proposals. Vague Executives such as a "Provisional National Government" were immediately challenged by demands to know such a Government's detailed construction and the method by which it would be appointed. If it savoured of the type which the Congress contemplated in their resolution of August 1942, he as President of the Moslem League would have nothing to do with it. Mr. Gandhi was certainly tied to precision and some clear thinking, and it may have been with a certain irritation at such close cross-examination that he retaliated with a counter-bombardment of his own.

<sup>1</sup> "The remedy now proffered by Mr. C. Rajagopalacharia and approved by Mr. Gandhi is suicidal to the best interests of the country." Western India National Liberal Association. Chairman, Sir Chimanlal Setalvad, August, 1944. "The formula strikes at the geographical, cultural and historical oneness of India." All-parties Punjab Hindus' Conference, August, 1944.

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter IV, page 49.

These questions related to a close analysis of the League's Lahore resolution. They covered demands for a clear definition of Pakistan which was not specifically mentioned by name in the resolution. Had it a Pan-Islamic interpretation? What distinguished an Indian Moslem from any other Indian? Was the demarcation to take place during British rule? How were Moslems under the Princes to be disposed of? Were Moslems other than those represented by the League to be consulted? But the most pertinent question of all was with reference to the people in the regions concerned. Was their voice to be heard?

In Mr. Jinnah's reply he raised one point of interest, which amounted to the acceptance of the term "Pakistan" by the League not in its wider sense but only in its limited application to India. The rest of his answer was for the most part a refusal to meet Mr. Gandhi's doubts on the grounds that the questions Mr. Gandhi raised did not fall under the category of clarification of the Lahore resolution. This was academically correct. But most of Mr. Gandhi's queries were of vital concern to the general issue and it was clear that the argument had now degenerated into a legal play on words. Both antagonists started to make lengthy references back to previous letters in the correspondence, and the *Civil and Military Gazette* aptly found a precedent for the situation in quoting Mr. Lloyd George when he was reputed to have said to Mr. de Valera with reference to the Irish question in 1921, "We have been solidly discussing matters for three days and have just reached the reign of Queen Elizabeth!"

There is no cause for a full analysis since the argument and counter-argument really covered little new ground and much of it might well have been anticipated by any student of Indian politics. In the many controversial statements made I found myself agreeing with Mr. Jinnah in minor details and with Mr. Gandhi on broad issues.

One particular statement of Mr. Jinnah challenged my own convictions :—

"Can you not appreciate our point of view that we claim the right of self-determination as a *nation* and not as a *territorial unit*, and that we are entitled to exercise our inherent right as a Moslem nation which is our birthright?"

My reading of this assertion is that in deciding the Pakistan issue the Moslems outside the regions affected are to be considered as one with those inside, the joint verdict of all Moslems deciding the fate of the Pakistan areas. If I am correct, by the same reasoning a few thousand scattered Englishmen in India, the Dominions and the Colonies, would be entitled to play as great a part in the fate of the form of Government in London as the people of England. Also by the same reasoning, it is surely correct to assume that the Hindus in the Pakistan areas are equally entitled to settle the fate of India as a whole. When we have finished being clever over definitions of what does or does not constitute a nation, we must inevitably return to the extremely simple and practical



governing factor of a geographical boundary, and assume that within that boundary the expressed wish of the people thus separated from other peoples must determine its form of government.

Elsewhere I have indicated my own inclination. But Mr. Gandhi chose words which put the case in a simpler yet forceful manner:—

“I find no parallel in history for a body of converts and their descendants claiming to be a nation apart from the parent stock. If India was one nation before the advent of Islam it must remain one in spite of the change of faith of a very large body of her children.”

There are, of course, large tribal sections in the North-West and not a few Moslem Rulers of States whose descent can be traced direct to the conquering Moslem stock of successive invasions. Nevertheless, Mr. Gandhi's picture remains, I believe, the one which is fundamentally true in spite of the lavish picture which Mr. Jinnah persuasively paints of the individualism of Moslem art, architecture, culture, language, habit and religion.

In spite of all this, Mr. Gandhi came near enough to accepting the partition of India to frighten very thoroughly large sections of his followers. The Liberals, the Hindu Mahasabha, the Sikhs and the Scheduled Castes were for a time much exercised; the Sikhs particularly so since Mr. Jinnah's own interpretation of a plebiscite was apparently that of a vote taken only from the Moslems affected. In effect this would mean that in the Districts concerned about one-third of the population would settle the fate of the whole. By all the tenets of common sense, a plebiscite, where applied, is applied to everybody. Certainly my dictionary confirms this.

Both men parted with assurances that this was not the end of the story. Personally I feel that next time they must get a little closer to each other on paper before they actually meet. It was all very disappointing for Mr. Rajagopalacharia, who, so far as a distant observer can judge, is the only man capable and clear-headed enough to effect the semblance of a settlement. Both in ability and political courage, in my view, he stands head and shoulders above his contemporaries.

By far the most rigid opposition to partition has from the beginning come from the All-India-Hindu-Mahasabha,<sup>1</sup> and the time has come to take stock of this formidable organization.

It is of comparatively recent inception and is the expression of militant Hinduism, the direct answer to the challenge of the sword of Islam as interpreted by the Moslem League. The Indian National Congress has fair reason to claim a non-communal status, for provided its clients make complete surrender it welcomes all denominations. In contrast the Mahasabha shouts from the house-tops that it is first and foremost exclusively Hindu. While many of its members have in the past been associated with the Congress, its present attitude to the latter

<sup>1</sup> “Akhand Hindustan” (United India), may be regarded as the slogan of the Mahasabha.

is one of suspicion. I offer two quotations which indicate the ambiguous nature of Mahasabha-Congress relations. Raja Maheshwar Dayal, Patna, December 1943:—

“Nobody can blame the Mahasabha for courageously and boldly trying to defend the rights and interests of the Hindus, but it will not do to attack the Congress built up by years of selfless toil. . . .”

Dr. S. P. Mukherjee, Press Conference, Lahore, January 1944:—

“If the Congress persists in its policy of appeasement, the Hindu Mahasabha will see to it that such a policy is not allowed to jeopardize the legitimate interests of Hindus.”

Dr. Mukherjee, a former prominent Bengal Congress leader, is now President of the Mahasabha.<sup>1</sup>

It is impossible to regard the activities of the Mahasabha without being impressed by the sincerity and practical utility of much of their endeavour. They see the virility of Islam and they look around and see the comparative physical poverty of the urban Hindu. They recall the days of great Hindu Kingdoms, of Vikramaditya and Prithi Raj. They maintain that as often as not the Moslem conquests were the result of intrigue and divided Hindu loyalties. They look to a physical rejuvenation and a spiritual renaissance of Hindu India. The chief exponent of this aspect of their activities is a delightful little man, Dr. B. S. Moonje. If he had his way, the country would be covered with Hindu military training colleges, and drill and physical culture would figure as the first item in the curriculum in all Hindu schools and institutes. These aspirations would command the sympathy of many soldiers, for we believe that the elements of military discipline never did anyone any harm and could with advantage be applied to every school in England. But in India one has to look to the motive. At the All-India Hindu Students Conference in December 1943, held under the auspices of the Mahasabha, after the usual resolutions about the political deadlock and the immediate formation of a National Government, the meeting went on to record a resolution exhorting Hindu youths to join the Army in order “*to strengthen the Hindu nation.*” Taken at their face value Dr. Moonje’s efforts are admirable. On full analysis it is difficult in the present circumstances to offer him unqualified support. Politically the Mahasabha experience dual demands on their loyalty. On the one hand they are pledged to a policy of the unity of India, a unity which pleads the preservation of the British connection. On the other hand, they look to the complete freedom of India unembarrassed by any outside interference. As champions of the freedom of India the Mahasabha have even gone so far as disclaiming

<sup>1</sup> On the 29th December 1943 at a full meeting of the Mahasabha at Amritsar, a song in tribute to the sacrifices of Congressmen led to a noisy demonstration from a large section of the audience.

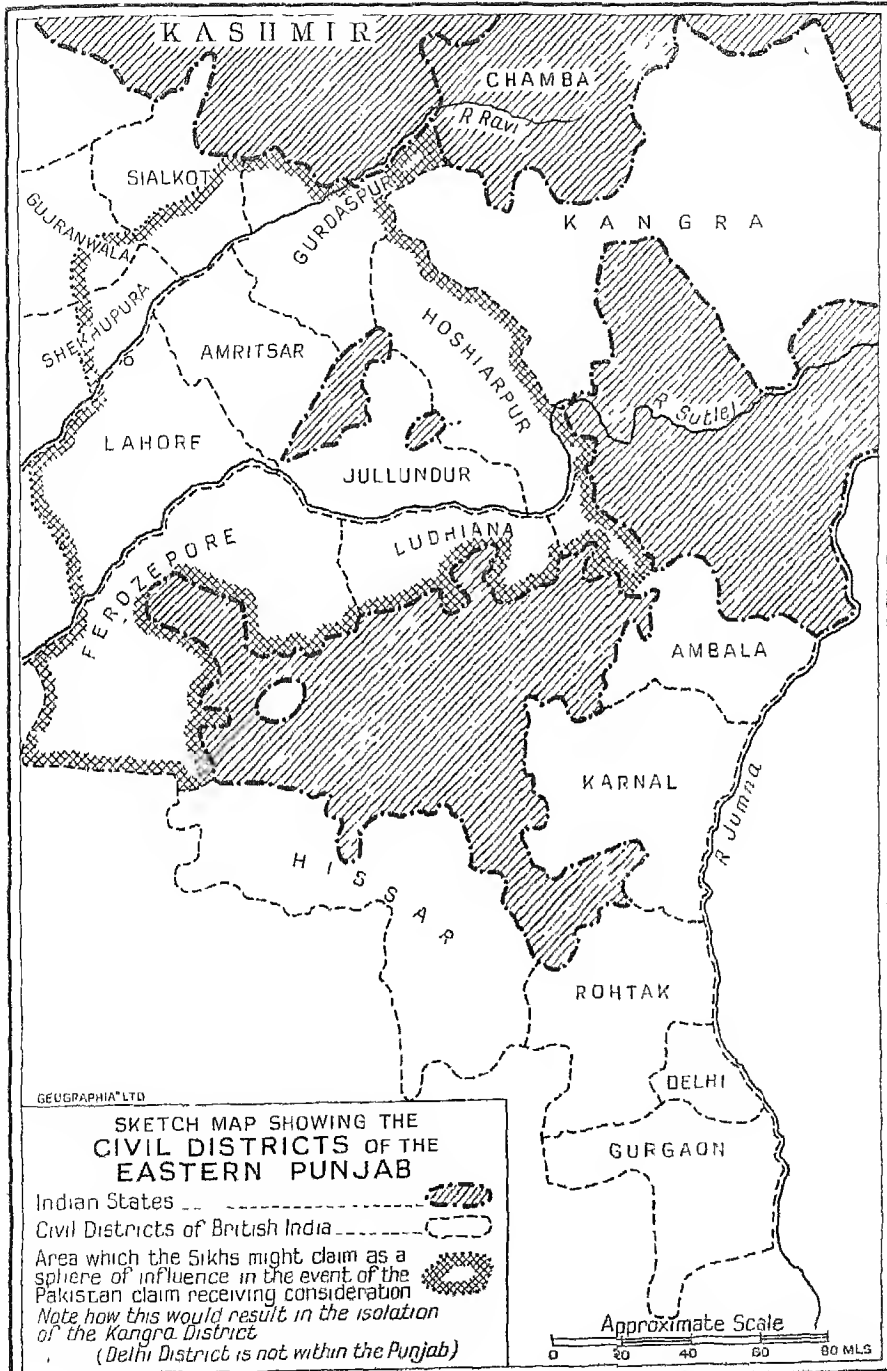
any communal bias, a lamentable confusion of policies which is not likely to impress those who are searching for practical solutions.<sup>1</sup>

The last days of December 1943 were fateful and prophetic for all those studying the Indian situation. I was busy wandering round the Hindu Mahasabha meeting at Amritsar with my friend Pandit Chuni Lal from Jullundur. There, under the great *pandal*, daily a crowd of 50,000 collected in front of an enormous relief model of the Indian Continent to receive the doctrine of the ancient glory of Hindu India. Simultaneously, a few hundred miles away in Karachi Mr. Jinnah was processing in a chariot drawn by 30 camels bedecked with flowers and accompanied by a mounted escort of the League National Guard, to the unfurling ceremony of the League flag. As I was arguing the case of Hindu India with Raja Narendra Nath of Lahore, my paper told me of the League's Committee of Action which was to "prepare the Moslems for the coming struggle for the achievement of Pakistan."

And yet at a meeting in Washington early in 1945, Mrs. Pandit, sister of Jawaharlal Nehru, could say, with presumed honest intention, "India is one large concentration camp. The country has no religious differences; her one religion is the religion of freedom"!

My talk with Raja Narendra Nath, so far as I remember, was mainly over an issue very significant for keen Mahasabhaites. It is that of joint or separate electorates. The present system of separate electorates owes its inception to an Indian decision when, in deference to Moslem wishes, the Lucknow Pact of 1916 between the Congress and the League recommended separate electorates as the method for political elections. I cannot refrain from the personal sentiment that during the era of the Round Table Conferences and on into the period of the "Communal Award" we missed an opportunity of seizing the bull by the horns and thrusting joint electorates on India. We may be perfectly certain that in any generation within our time joint elections, in their first trial, will almost certainly be conducted under conditions of considerable confusion, in so far as the administration of the election is concerned. Yet it is fairly certain also that if they are ever to regulate an elective system of a united India the only chance of their initiation would be during the British administration and if necessary with British troops posted at the polling stations. Results might not carry reality on the first application. But would matters not improve as time passes? Mr. Sleem, the Punjab Advocate-General, in contrast to the accepted view of the dire results of experiment, holds that, once the decision is taken to establish joint electorates, there will follow an immediate modification of all public expressions of political and communal opinion. Thus a Moslem candidate in a territorial constituency would be interested not only in collecting the votes of his own community but would wish to capture those of the other communities also. In these circumstances

<sup>1</sup> Amritsar. 29th December, 1943. Resolution of Rai Bahadur Mehr Chand Khanna, that India had awakened to such political consciousness that "nobody could prevent her from going ahead on the path of freedom." Seconded by Dr. Moonje, who said that the resolution was free from communal virus and an answer to those who labelled the Mahasabha as a communal organization.





Bluejackets of the Royal Indian Navy aboard the new sloop H.M.I.S. *Nai bada*

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it will avail him little to preach a "two-nation" theory, any more than it would avail a Hindu in a similar situation to preach an exclusively Hindu gospel. But even supposing such optimism to be misjudged and assuming that under the normal system of combined territorial constituencies a Hindu would always vote for a Hindu and a Moslem for a Moslem, would the net result be very different from what it is now? Would not your Assemblies, whether Central or Provincial, still be filled with representatives from the communities in roughly the same proportions as obtain in the present circumstances? If this be so, could we not at least set up the machinery for elections on non-communal lines, even if the electorate in its inexperience continues to use it in a communal way?

The Mahasabha are at the moment prominent in their vociferous and almost hysterical condemnation of the latest constitutional proposals for an interim Government. As an All-India organization they were not invited to the Viceroy's Simla Conference in June 1945.<sup>1</sup> Their fierce hostility to any suggestion of Moslem parity, either in temporary conference or permanent council, is the background of their present attitude. Their Working Committee passed a resolution on the 24th June condemning the new proposals as "A deliberate device on the part of the British to perpetuate British rule over India"! One immediate result of such unbalanced obstinacy would seem to be to separate them from many of their Hindu colleagues in the Congress, who are at present seeking co-operation with the Viceroy in the search for an interim solution.

I have left over for final consideration the Scheduled Castes. Dr. Ambedkar,<sup>2</sup> their leader, would have us believe that there are 60,000,000 of them. Whatever their numbers, through the exertions of their leader the Scheduled Castes are on the map. While I cannot agree with Dr. Ambedkar's conclusions regarding the manner in which he would establish his community as a permanent force to be reckoned with, I recognize the great ability and courage with which he leads his flock. His life has not been an easy one and he has had to fight hard. But he has climbed to the top and he is determined to protect his community in his own way. The process of segregating communities in India is epidemical. It is therefore not surprising to find that Dr. Ambedkar, who believes passionately in the segregation of his own community, has written an extremely detailed exposition of the Moslem League case in a book entitled *Thoughts on Pakistan*. In the case of his own community the Doctor has come to the firm conclusion that they will never receive justice or recognition from the Caste Hindus. His decision is presumably based on years of personal and general experience. The Hindus may at Mr. Gandhi's bidding pay lip service to brotherly intentions, but in practice they remain as cold and unsympathetic as ever. This being

<sup>1</sup> Other communities not represented as such at the Conference were the Anglo-Indians, Christians and Parsees. The latter have never pressed for political power. Yet their significance is out of all proportion to their limited numbers.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, M.A., Ph.D., D.Sc., Member, Viceroy's Executive Council.

the case, Dr. Ambedkar concludes that the only alternative policy is for the Scheduled Castes to close their ranks and consolidate as a community with all the carefully conditioned loyalty which constant propaganda can command. He seriously advocates population transfer in order to bring this about. Population transfer in certain circumstances of complete mutual agreement might be a proposition worth consideration in the case of the Sikh claims referred to in a previous chapter. In the case of the Pakistan project it is less feasible, and in the case of the Scheduled Castes I would say it is wellnigh impossible. Yet Dr. Ambedkar has come nearer to defining his demands in this respect than either Moslems or Sikhs. In the fourth resolution of the All-India Scheduled Castes Conference held at Nagpur in July 1942 it was resolved that a new Constitution would provide for "the transfer of the Scheduled Castes from their present habitation to form separate Scheduled Caste villages away from and independent of Hindu villages." To effect this a Commission was to be set up with powers to take over cultivable waste land and acquire land already occupied. The Central Government were to set aside five crores of rupees a year for this purpose. In elaborating this demand Dr. Ambedkar refers to "separate settlements,"<sup>1</sup> and since no particular area in India is mentioned, the assumption is that the process of segregation would be applied everywhere with equal pressure. Certainly, to collect Untouchables from all over India and settle them into one Province of their own is a proposition not worth serious examination. Dr. Ambedkar's intention which I read to mean the acquisition of one village in about every ten throughout the land is closer to reality, but I cannot see that it would achieve its object. If Untouchables are already segregated within villages, with restrictions on the wells from which they draw water and the paths they use and the manner in which they celebrate their weddings or bury their dead, will not that segregation be equally applied to the whole village when they have villages which they can call their own? Furthermore, will not the duties of the proposed Commission be insurmountable? It takes two to three years for an official to complete the process of land-consolidation for one Punjab village, a process of accepted advantage to all concerned. How long will it take to effect a process not of consolidating land but of consolidating men and their families in 700,000 villages? Perhaps I have missed some factor which might place the issue in a different light. Yet I have read much of the public literature on the subject with the above conclusions. In his attack on the present electoral system in its application to his community Dr. Ambedkar is on firmer ground. In simple terms, he states that if you recognize separate electorates for Moslems and Sikhs you should recognize them for Untouchables. Under the present system there is a compromise, for although certain seats are reserved for the Untouchables, yet both Hindus and Untouchables are entitled to vote for the candidate. It follows that, where the Hindu vote greatly exceeds the vote of the Untouchables, the candidate will almost certainly be one who is

<sup>1</sup> *Mr. Gandhi and the Emancipation of the Untouchables*, Chapter VIII. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar.

representative of Hindu interests rather than those of the Untouchables. If he was a candidate of the latter by their own free choice, Hindus could, I imagine, put up a rival candidate to sit for the same Scheduled Caste seat.

So long as we admit to the separate electorate system, it seems only right that it should be of universal application. Mr. Gandhi has, of course, held very different views.<sup>1</sup> From the beginning his declared object has been to bring back the Untouchables into the Hindu fold. It is to be admitted that unfortunately his success has been negligible. I believe in Southern India there has been a degree of sanction to temple entry, but from my observation in Northern India conditions are as they always were. And yet I cannot help thinking that if Dr. Ambedkar could apply his great talent to persistent negotiation with contemporary Hindu leaders he might achieve a practical realization of his goal. With much persuasion and not a little scorn he singles out men such as Jawaharlal Nehru and chastises them for never having lifted a finger to alleviate the conditions under which 60 millions of his fellow-citizens exist more as human cattle than as men. Let him speak for himself:—

“You can get thousands of Hindu Youths to join political propaganda but you cannot get one single youth to take up the cause of breaking the caste system or of removing Untouchability.”

These are words that sting; and they are true. The only lasting solace will come from education, an education which is not just an expansion of facilities for undergraduates to take degrees, for the highest scholars in the land have proved no better at facing a great social problem more courageously than anyone else, but from an education taught to every boy and girl in India from the day they are capable of walking to a Primary School.

There are many other parties which, in the conditions of constant experiment, rise and fall with fluctuating success. Of these I would say that the most important is the small though vociferous party of Mr. M. N. Roy, the Radical Democratic Party,<sup>2</sup> with their paper, *Independent India*. Roy, an ardent anti-fascist, has had a stormy career with trips to America, China and Russia. In Russia he became the eastern expert in the Communist International, quarrelled with them and returned to India through Germany and France. In India he served his term of imprisonment and on release joined the Congress. In modern times he has come out with an unambiguous anti-Axis policy and full support to India's war effort. His approach to the problems of the day is essentially one of assigning to labour and industry a dominating position in India with democratic control of policy and economics by the factories and the men who work them. Of the India of Gandhi, he has said:—

<sup>1</sup> The “Harijan Sevak Sangh” is Mr. Gandhi's welfare organization for the Untouchables.

<sup>2</sup> This party has only emerged during the last few years and had not been formed previous to the last elections. Hence it is not represented yet in the Central Assembly, and presumably for this reason received no invitation to send representatives to the Simla conference in June 1945.



"Gandhism is the expression of the worst of our people, of its ignorance, its cowardice, its defeatism, its backwardness."

The National Liberal Federation is not so much a party as an organization, and I am not aware that any candidate has lately stood for a constituency on the ticket of Liberalism. It commands some of the best brains in the country and it fulfils one extremely useful purpose. When direct negotiation between extreme nationalists and the Government breaks down, the Liberal Federation has frequently in the past operated as a half-way house for indirect negotiation. As might be expected, its views are therefore expressive of constitutional progress with concessions to the Congress. It has repeatedly pressed for the release of Congress *détenus* yet it has equally condemned their resolution of August 1942. It stands for the restitution of party government in the Provinces even if this involves government by minorities. The All-Parties Conference is apparently a forum which functions under its auspices and collects on particular occasions to express views representing as much party unanimity as can be canvassed.

There are a hundred and one other bits and pieces.<sup>1</sup> Within the Congress itself there are several sub-sections, while the Moslem League, though hitherto experiencing no internal tendencies to fragmentation, externally has a number of rival Moslem factions with which to contend. There are Khaksars, Momins, Ahrars, the All-India Shia Conference and the Jamiat-ul-Ulema, to name but a few. Of these the Khaksars at one time assumed a militant role and Government forbade their formal recognition and locked up the leaders. They developed a propensity to putting on khaki shorts and shirts and drilling with spades. Their leader, Maulana Alama Mashriqi, after his release recently tried to assume the role of mediator between Mr. Gandhi and Mr. Jinnah and wrote the latter some impassioned letters in 1944. But his efforts suggested that he sought prominence for himself and his not very prominent organization, rather than any stroke of bold leadership.

The Moslems who owe allegiance to factions outside the League certainly run into several millions but are not formidable enough in any way to challenge the League's established position. Perhaps of greater significance than an assessment of small parties is just the fact that if one was to challenge the 16 million Moslems in the Punjab as to what party they owed allegiance, at least 10 millions of them would state that they were simply Moslems and belonged to no League or party at all! This is the kind of answer in my view which might equally well be expected in other parts of the country as well.

These are a few of the pieces in the puzzle, and some of them may be destined to play an expanding part in India's future. It will certainly be of interest to watch the progress of such a man as Mr. Roy and his followers, for so far as can be judged their interests lie in the propagation of social rather than communal policies and as such they must command

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix V.

the attention of those who look to the development of a true Indian democracy.

We in the homogeneity of our compact island with three or four parties firmly established, with years of traditional policies behind them, find it hard to appreciate the difficulties of India in the opening stages of experiment; and it is with India's very different initial background in view that we trust there will be every facility in the future for Indians to come to England and study a democracy which has long been rid of its growing pains.

## CHAPTER VII

### "WITHOUT FEAR OR FAVOUR"

IN A COUNTRY WITH AN EVEN LEVEL OF EDUCATION THE ADMINISTRATION impinges so unostentatiously on the natural life that it passes unnoticed. In a sense we all seem to have a say in affairs and when things go wrong the Municipality or someone in Parliament knows about it and the Press airs the matter and all is well. This is just government by the people for the people. But in a large continent of 400 millions, where, roughly, humanity divides into the educated few and the uneducated many, the Administration as represented to the latter assumes a far greater prominence than is normally its due; and the integrity of the Administration therefore becomes all the more important.

I propose here to place the cart before the horse, and before attempting to analyse the problem I am setting out in some detail the particular example which I choose in illustration. The narrative is that of the case of Pollard versus Satya Gopal as recorded in the *All-India Reporter*.<sup>1</sup>

It is a queer story of the greatest significance which passed almost unnoticed in India except for some publicity in the Calcutta newspapers of the 10th August 1943. I record only the briefest outline of events to indicate certain imperative needs for the future.

On the 9th September 1942 there were disturbances in the Civil Court buildings at Berhampur in the Murshidabad District of Bengal as the result of which Mr. R. C. Pollard, the Superintendent of Police, was ordered to make certain arrests by the District Judge. Four youths were accordingly marched off by the police. Instead of taking the party straight to the police thana Mr. Pollard took them first to his bungalow. Here a hostile crowd collected among whom was a lawyer, Mr. Satya Gopal, an uncle of one of the youths under arrest. Satya Gopal stated that he had come to inquire about the provision of the law under which his nephew had been arrested. Words were exchanged

<sup>1</sup> *All India Reporter*. Vol. 30, November, 1943. Part 359. Mr. Beverley Nichols makes a reference to this case in Part III, Chapter IV, of *Verdict on India*. I had written up this case long before I read Mr. Nichols's book and was interested to find that it had come to his notice; since it has never received the publicity which might have been expected.

between Pollard and Satya Gopal as a result of which a case for assault was brought against Pollard. A first-class<sup>1</sup> Magistrate, Mr. S. Choudhury, heard the case and decided that the assault took place while the accused was acting in the discharge of his duties and that therefore under Section 197 of the Criminal Procedure Code he could not be prosecuted without the previous sanction of the Local Government. The complainant therefore moved the District Sessions Judge of Murshidabad for a further inquiry. The Judge heard no further evidence but expressed the opinion that the accused, so far from acting in the discharge of his duty, had failed to act in that capacity. Hitherto only the complainant had been heard and the accused's version had not been given. The matter went back to the first Magistrate who now held a full inquiry and tried the accused under Section 355 of the Indian Penal Code. This time he found the accused guilty and fined him 200 rupees. The accused appealed, asking that his appeal should not return to the District Sessions Judge of Murshidabad but should be transferred to the Court of the neighbouring Sessions Judge in the Nadia District. The High Court ordered the transfer and the Sessions Judge of Nadia upheld the conviction.

In the normal course of events there the matter would have ended. But it so happened that the circumstances of an entirely different case in which Pollard had investigation responsibilities were to lead to the revelations which brought the censure of the Chief Justice of Bengal on the Chief Minister, Mr. A. K. Fazlul-Haq.

This case was that of *Emperor v. Sadhu Majhi, Kumar Singh Chhajore and others*. By an involved application of litigation the Bengal High Court called for the record of this case under Ordinance 19 of 1943, and there was then revealed a state of affairs representing ministerial interference without precedent in the history of the Indian Judiciary.

A certain rice dealer, Ebrahim, was under contract to supply the Berhampur jail with rice. This involved the loading of rice at a village, Jiagunj, and its passage by river boat to Berhampur. On the 19th August 1942 some boats were thus loaded on a moonlit night when a party of men appeared and under the pretence of implementing an existing order forbidding the export of rice from the District took away 19 bags of rice which they said they themselves would deposit at the police thana. The rice was never deposited and the alleged dacoity was traced to a party of men, the leader of which was Kumar Singh Chhajore, a Municipal Commissioner of Jiagunj Municipality and a man of considerable local importance. Mr. Pollard, as Superintendent of Police, was at the time the officer responsible for the conduct of the case and the arrest of the alleged offenders. It appeared he had the impression that his labours to bring the accused to face trial were being frustrated and he accordingly reported to his Deputy Inspector-General as follows:—

<sup>1</sup> The legal system of India is briefly tabulated in Appendix IV.

"There is definitely an impression in Jiagunj that higher authority is unwilling for this case to proceed. . . . I am making a complaint to the District Magistrate. Meanwhile I ask the D.I.G. Police kindly to instruct me as to whether this case should be prosecuted or not. The Circle Inspector and I are both disgusted with this continuous obstruction of justice by the Court out of deference to the moneyed Marwaris of Jiagunj and it is very bad for the morale of the police to find their attempts to prevent offences and carry out Government instructions being frustrated by superior officers of the same Government. . . ."

A copy of this report was sent to Mr. S. Chatterjee, the Collector and District Magistrate of Murshidabad.

At this stage mention should be made of certain letters written by the Chief Minister to Mr. Chatterjee. Exactly how knowledge of the existence of these letters came to light is not clear. The Commissioner of the Division, Mr. O. L. Martin, stated that he came to know of them, and in April 1943 he visited Berhampur and received the letters from Mr. Chatterjee.

The first letter was dated the 30th September 1942. It stated that there was "some political importance" in the case of *Emperor v. Kumar Singh Chhajore*, pending in the Court of the Sub-Divisional Officer, Lalbagh, and it asked for the adjournment of the case, so that the Chief Minister could go through the papers and decide "whether Government should have any say in the matter." Orders were duly handed on to the Sub-Divisional Officer and the case was postponed; which accounts for the official protest of Mr. Pollard already mentioned.

The next letter was dated the 28th October 1942. This time it was conveyed personally by a certain Mr. S. Badruddoja, the Secretary of the Progressive Coalition Party of Bengal. The significant portion of this letter reads:—

"... He (Mr. Badruddoja) is one of our principal supporters and a prominent member of the Bengal Legislative Assembly. There is one particular matter regarding which he will speak to you, and I hope you will hear him fully and help him to the best possible extent. I am referring to the case with regard to which that 'Imperial Officer' has made those stupid remarks and objectionable comments. You have done well to tell him that it was I who am responsible for the step that has been taken. I have told the I.G. Police everything, and let us hope that when the time comes, I will be able to give him a good ducking. I do not wish to say much in detail because Mr. Badruddoja will be able to put our case completely before you. . . ."

The only possible interpretation on the words "our case" was accepted by the High Court as referring to the Jiagunj case, in which the Chief Minister was, for reasons unknown, extremely interested.

It would have been thought that at a time when there was a grave

shortage of rice in the country, with the fear of widespread famine overshadowing the land, Ministers would have been eager to encourage all those engaged in tracing the disappearance of rice, the staple food of the Province, whether such disappearance was free of suspicion or not. This, however, is not material to the present argument.<sup>1</sup>

The third letter, dated the 3rd November 1943, was also conveyed by Mr. Badruddoja. In it there appeared the following passage:—

“I am told that the Superintendent of Police is adopting most autocratic methods in order to bring about the conviction of the accused. . . . The S.D.O. should assert himself and not yield to threats. . . . As a matter of fact, if he thinks that the evidence does not justify the commitment and that the facts and circumstances justify a discharge of the accused, he should not hesitate to do so, because of the consequences which his orders might have on the Superintendent of Police. I can give him the assurance through you that Government will stand by him and support him in what he does. I have asked Mr. Badruddoja to explain to you what I would very much wish to see should be done. I do not like to put these things on paper. *This letter is meant for you only and I hope you will destroy it after perusal.*”

On the 7th November 1942 Mr. Chatterjee made an order transferring the case first to his own file and then to that of Mr. S. Choudhury, who was to proceed with trial as a special Magistrate under Ordinance 2 of 1942.

At the same time as Mr. Choudhury was trying the above case he was also sitting as an ordinary Magistrate trying the case against Mr. Pollard (Pollard *v.* Satya Gopal). The Jiagunj case was transferred under Ordinance 2 of 1942 to Mr. Choudhury. Normally, under Ordinance 2 the case would never have come up to the High Court. But Ordinance 19 of 1943 gave the High Court appellate and revisional jurisdiction over convictions under Ordinance 2. In the Jiagunj case Mr. Choudhury found that while the action of the accused fell within the definition of dacoity there had been no dishonesty on the part of the accused at the time of the taking of the rice. He therefore gave reasons why the dacoity charge should fail and convicted the accused of criminal misappropriation, sentencing him and his colleagues to a payment of 50 rupees each to Ebrahim the rice contractor.

The implication of all these events is summed up in the words of the Chief Justice<sup>2</sup> when he said that:—

“Having regard to the fact that the District Magistrate complied with the Chief Minister’s request asking for the rice looting case to

<sup>1</sup> It is of passing interest that in May 1945 the Woodhead Commission appointed to inquire into the Bengal famine published their report. They did not spare the Provincial Government: “Corruption was widespread throughout the Province and in many classes of society.” Sections of the public “made enormous profits at the expense of millions who suffered in the famine.”

<sup>2</sup> Sir Harold Derbyshire, K.C.

be held up over the Pujahs and having regard to the outcome of the Jiagunj case, there is a suspicion—and not a mild one—that the District Magistrate conveyed the Chief Minister's wishes to Mr. Choudhury at a time when Mr. Choudhury was trying the case against Mr. Pollard."

The High Court accordingly called upon the District Magistrate to show cause why the convictions in the Jiagunj case should not be set aside and the matter dealt with according to ordinary law. If dacoity had in fact been committed the punishment of a fine of 50 rupees was of course ludicrous.

At this stage we may perhaps leave the two cases; and the eventual fate of the unfortunate Mr. Pollard or Kumar Singh does not concern us. Suffice it to say that the High Court could not accept the District Magistrate's explanations of his action and the special Bench of the High Court consisting of the Chief Justice and Justices Khundkar and Lodge, in reviewing the proceedings, did not spare either the Chief Minister or the District Magistrate.

The words of the Chief Justice must speak for themselves:—

"On the facts of this case, I have not the slightest hesitation in saying that there was interference by Mr. Fazlul-Haq in the Jiagunj case and powerful pressure exerted by him upon the District Magistrate in the Jiagunj case in order to influence both the District Magistrate and the trying Magistrate in favour of the accused and against Pollard. I have the strongest suspicion that interference has had a considerable effect both upon the Jiagunj case and Mr. Pollard's case. If these two convictions were to be allowed to stand in the circumstances that have been revealed, no one would have confidence in the administration of criminal justice in this Province. In my opinion, Pollard's case should be set aside on the grounds of improper interference with the course of justice. I am of the opinion that both these cases should be retried by some other Magistrate or Magistrates in some other District."

The Chief Justice continued that in his view it was clear that the Chief Minister had used his position to influence the course of justice for political consideration. He recalled the oath of office which the Chief Minister had taken and finally he came to the drastic conclusion that in writing the letters and in sending Mr. Badruddoja with two of them to instruct Mr. Chatterjee Mr. Fazlul-Haq broke his oath:—

"If solemn promissory oaths by persons who take office in the State are to be disregarded as mere formalities, there is no possibility of good government."

Of Mr. Chatterjee he had little to say, but it was to the point:—

"In my view he is not fit to exercise supervision over judicial

officers and he should be transferred to some other branch of the Public Service where plasticity may possibly be an advantage and not a danger to the community."

What is the lesson of this story? It is not a simple matter and to thrash it out thoroughly would need a highly technical examination of the judicial machinery of India, for which I am not competent. But at the risk of covering some rather heavy details, I will set out the salient features as they impress a layman.

There are three elements involved. First, there is the Civil Service in a dual capacity of revenue and judicial responsibility. Secondly, there is the Judiciary itself; and thirdly, there is the Executive, in the form of Provincial Ministries, the representatives of the people.

In very general terms, the responsibility of collecting revenue and administering the law are concentrated in the same agencies up to the level of a Deputy Commissioner. Thus, a tehsildar collects revenue within his tehsil and is also a second-class Magistrate, while above him the Deputy Commissioner also collects revenue through a Revenue Assistant and acts as District Magistrate with first-class magisterial powers. But above this level the two chains of responsibility separate and some officers remain in the Executive Administration while others turn as specialists to the Judiciary, undergoing specialized training for the purpose.

But the Judiciary also recruits both from the Bar and the Provincial Civil Service and only about one-third of the judges in a Provincial High Court are I.C.S. men.<sup>1</sup> Though above a certain level the two aspects of government separate, yet it will be appreciated that up to that level their work is interwoven. An intricate situation is further complicated by the provincial Executive in the form of the Ministry. Ministers formulate policy and the Administration have the practical task of applying it. The peculiar educational conditions of India, to which I have referred so often, connote a very close alliance between the Administration and the Executive and it is not unusual to find a Minister with a son who is a Deputy Commissioner or a Deputy Commissioner with a brother who is a Minister. It might be argued that it is only right that a Provincial Government might expect to find District Officers appointed who are sympathetic to their particular policy. There is logic in this up to a point. But it is immediately evident that, since a Deputy Commissioner is also a District Magistrate, there is a grave danger not of a bias applied so much to the administration as to law and its application. It is for such reasons that judicial officers are anxious to free the Judiciary from all outside influence whether it be from an ambiguous relationship with the Administration or a more nefarious relationship with the Ministry. Sir John Beaumont, the late Chief Justice of the Bombay High Court, strongly advocated the separation of the Judiciary from the Executive, which would involve the abolition

<sup>1</sup> Recruitment from the Bar is both from England and India.

of the judicial branch of the I.C.S. and an increase of magistrates from the Bar.

The system by which the judiciary and the administrative branches are linked under a common responsibility on the lower levels of the District and Tehsil grew up in the days when District Officers were invariably Englishmen, fortunate in that they had no axe to grind and that there was no possibility of ministerial interference, for there were no Ministers. The system may have been only the expression of a cold bureaucracy but at least it was impartial, for it had no cause to be otherwise. The question arises if, in the changed conditions of the future, the whole machinery will not have to be revised and a judicial system built up which is entirely free from either political or administrative control on all levels. Appointments within such a Service would be the responsibility of the High Court concerned.

Under the present Government of India Act appointments of District Judges are the responsibility of the Governor of the Province, while Judges of the High Court are appointed by His Majesty in Council. There is therefore no danger of actual appointments being tampered with and future legislation must perpetuate arrangements by which legal appointments are no concern of the Administration. I have no idea how judges are appointed in the Dominions. In India appointments in the High Courts must surely continue to be the responsibility of some agency whose impartiality and integrity cannot be questioned. I am not suggesting that that agency need be British. I am suggesting that it must be entirely divorced from the Executive and from the Administration. If a crack appears at the top it widens further down. Some means must be devised by which there is an unfettered judicial service unconcerned with the machinery of Government.

It is beyond the scope of this brief survey to discuss the future of the Federal Court. Sir John Beaumont considers it an expensive luxury as at present constituted, costing about £25,000 a year for four weeks' work in the year. It certainly seems that with final appellate authority still with the Privy Council the Federal Court hardly justifies its existence. There has always seemed to me something unreal about the Privy Council arbitrating for Indian cases 6,000 miles away and the requirements of the future are surely for a final Indian Court of Appeal with full authority over the whole Indian judicial system.

Mr. Penderel Moon has devoted an interesting chapter in his book<sup>1</sup> to the plight of the peasantry in the throes of a modern law machine with its bewildering library of immense codes and its heavy vocabulary of the Courts. The miscarriage of justice, more often than not, he judges to be the result. My experience with the Civil Liaison Organization was sufficient to show me that the Western system of justice has certainly solved little for the peasantry. Not once but a hundred times one saw the machinery of the Courts defeating the people who had invoked it for their own protection. The last state of a litigant was worse than the

<sup>1</sup> *Strangers in India*, P. Moon. See also Chapter XX.



first. Mr. Moon advocates the scrapping of the Indian Evidence Act, the admissibility of "hearsay", and finally the introduction of a rough jury system. With all this one must agree, even to the greatly expanded powers of subordinate Magistrates. If the people themselves could have a say in the appointment of their law officers, there would be some prospect of a quicker and more equitable application of law. The public very soon discover the mistakes of a man who has to administer rough justice. This may seem to be a reversal of that isolation of the law which has already been suggested. But interference from above is a very different matter from responsibility to those below. The extension of the "panchayat"<sup>1</sup> system has frequently been discussed. The powers of a village panchayat are at present limited to the award of a fine of 50 rupees. In the Punjab, under the Panchayat Act, any village which cares to establish a panchayat can do so on submitting its official application and it is significant that only about one village in every four at present has its panchayat. It is probable that issues are never put to the village community, and so matters drift on and village India remains a prey to the hazards of the Courts. But in a decentralization of all aspects of life, whether civic, commercial or industrial, lies the salvation of the peasant. This conviction at least we hold in common with Mr. Gandhi.

If we were to explore further into the matter we would find that a highly organized law system is but an inseparable element in a process of the expansion of life in general which must come inevitably to rural India. It is difficult to see how, if the country accepts the toys of civilization, the telegraph, motor transport, roads and railways, it can avoid the imposition of rules and regulations according to a more developed standard of education. Therein lies the root of the matter. The exercise of law is but a part of life itself and while the happenings of the outside world are fast arriving in the villages the village mind is still harnessed to the primitive plough. In the march of time education has been sadly left at the post; but that is another matter for a separate analysis.

My own conclusion is that we are working to a system by which the lower Courts will become truly democratic with the operation of a quick code of justice and the extended use of amateur law officers. Once above the level of the District, law officers recruited from the Bar in both India and England will take control as officers of an Indian Legal Service with final authority vested in a High Court of India. In future negotiations it is to be hoped that our Indian leaders will wish the retention of a British Chief Justice of India. I say this with no inclination whatsoever as to racial distinctions of ability or integrity. There are Indian judges as capable, unbiased and prudent as any importation. But the point is not what they are but what they would be considered to be by the people of India. At this stage a Chief Justice interpreting the whole legal fabric of India would, as a Hindu or a Moslem, labour under

<sup>1</sup> The indigenous system of local village courts of five elected members.

difficulties and limitations beyond the control of any single man, even assuming that he embodied the qualities of Socrates and King Solomon.

It will never be possible to prevent ministerial interference in the Administration, for partisanship and nepotism are matters of a man's conscience which no law can affect. But at least interference with the course of justice can be obstructed, and it is for future Constitution-makers to give practical shape to such obstruction.

## CHAPTER VIII

### DEFENCE

NO SCHEME FOR INDIA CAN DEVELOP FROM NATURAL HEALTHY PREMISES unless it is based on world confidence. Such confidence takes no heed of either West or East; nor is it finally concerned with Constitutions. It rests on the reality of secure defence; and it needs little particular intuition to note that the future international prospect will emphasize rather than diminish the importance of India's strategical situation in relation to Asia and the rest of the world. When therefore the makers of Constitutions in Britain and India have fully examined the last permutations and combinations of the future Government of the Continent, they must inevitably return to consider the one factor which should ultimately confirm the basic form of any Constitution, the degree of the ability of the people to defend themselves. There is at present little evidence that this aspect of the Indian problem is receiving the detailed attention from political leaders which is its due, while in current literature there are few books which face up to the difficulties of defence considerations in a changing India.<sup>1</sup>

Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of non-violent non-co-operation may be practically applied so long as there is an excuse to claim that the butt of non-violence is an Administration which is hostile to national aspirations. Harassed Deputy Commissioners and Police Superintendents experience situations of extreme delicacy with bloodshed on both sides followed by the usual monotonous process of arrest and imprisonment. The cycle, though unproductive, at least follows the laws of cause and effect and is therefore comprehensible.

But if the target of British responsibility at the centre be removed and that of an independent responsible Indian Union be substituted, then a national creed of non-violence becomes meaningless. The Mahatma's speculation of the people lying down in front of the advancing armies of Japan after India had been abandoned by the British was the wilful extension of a peace-time theory to fit an unforeseen hypothetical situation of war. It could be conveniently postulated; but it could never have been put into practice. Its actual application would have

<sup>1</sup> An exception is *India and Democracy*, by Sir George Schuster and Guy Wint (Part II. Chapter III).

connoted an India dominated by Japan and it would merely have been interpreted by the rest of the world as an ingenious method of disguising the normal symptoms of cowardice. Though the personal magnetism of Mahatma Gandhi may for a time win a few genuine adherents to his doctrine, such principles will never be supported once a self-governing India is faced with the hard reality of its own responsibility. It will realize then, as many realize now, that a people's claim to nationality with pretensions of love for their country, presumably stronger than their hatred of an alien, rests in the last resort on a personal surrender and a readiness to fight for their soil. We assume therefore that the India of the future wishes to defend her own land.

We are considering Defence and it is therefore unnecessary to moralize on the merits of the various Constitutional choices which may be offered for consideration. But we must have a clear idea of what those choices are; and I propose here to speculate only on the main tendencies which may emerge.

The Draft Declaration<sup>1</sup> brought to India by Sir Stafford Cripps being still the official clue to the future, it affords a logical basis for investigation. If we exclude the more improbable interpretations which might be read into the Declaration and the many possible variations of detail which arise if an innumerable number of areas wish to open up direct negotiation with Britain we are left with three broad propositions.

First, there is the Union which Britain obviously desires; a Federal structure internally analogous to that adumbrated in the Government of India Act, 1935, but in its external relations carrying complete Dominion Status as a free partner in the British Commonwealth.

Secondly, there is a Union, identical in its external relationship to the above, but in its internal structure not necessarily embracing all Provinces in a Federation. The Provinces which elect to remain outside the Union would be in direct treaty relations with the British Government.

Finally, there is a Union which elects to secession and thereby becomes a free nation in the international arena, with complete control over its own foreign policy. Such a status is contemplated by the Indian National Congress; and it is doubtful, if once the secession issue became a reality, whether the Continent would maintain its cohesion. Certain areas might show reluctance to follow the Centre into the unknown seas of isolation from the British connection; so that the divisions outlined in the second alternative would again appear and several areas or Provinces might elect to remain in treaty relations as integral portions of the Commonwealth.

Since defence plans and foreign policy go hand-in-hand, a useful yard-stick is to survey the various policies which each of these three plans might suggest in the development of India's future foreign relations.

The defence problem of the first type of Union, an India of full Dominion Status, is from the Union's point of view the least formidable. The Treaty to be concluded, while asking the same obligations from the Indian Dominion to the Commonwealth as are proffered by the other

<sup>1</sup> The Declaration in detail is set out in Appendix II.

members of the family, would in return offer the full facilities of Britain for the equipment and training of India's armed forces. There would then be British officers and instructors under contract in the three Defence Services seconded from the British Services for stated periods. These would be chosen from among those with Indian experience.

But in regard to the employment of British troops in India, the whole assumption must be that India will have travelled far enough on the road to a solid independent Union, in which there would be no further need for British troops for the purposes of internal security. India, we must assume, will be facing her old enemy, communalism, unaided. It may be a bitter experience. But if it is ever to be faced there is little reason for not facing it now, for there are no indications that communal tension will have eased in ten years' time. This is not an advocacy to hand over the Continent to bloodshed and revolution. It is but to face a situation in which for many years the communal bogey will be manifested in a thousand small ways in the Administration, in partisanship and jobbery; in situations, in fact, in which the presence of British troops would have little significance. If, however, the Indian Dominion requested the presence of British troops for internal security, and were prepared to pay for them, that would be another matter, for presumably troops of the Crown so requested in any Dominion of the Commonwealth would be forthcoming.

It might be argued that British troops should be so retained as a last insurance in upholding future treaty obligations to the States and smaller minorities. My own view is that it would be utterly unreal to post British troops in an Indian Dominion for such a purpose. If the necessity ever arose to use the troops a ridiculous situation would be created by which, in the territory of a so-called free partner of the British Commonwealth, Britain would be at war with that partner in respect of the latter's exercise of her internal administration. The status of Dominionship would immediately collapse. It would be far simpler to maintain troops in the country under treaty with an India of complete independence, in which case there is the precedent of Egypt. If such a treaty ever had to be framed the arrangements with the Egyptian Government could well be studied for guidance.

In matters of foreign policy successive Imperial Conferences have by now established that a Dominion has complete freedom to control its own relations with other countries. The last war strengthened this liberty and the Dominions and India accepted individual membership of the League of Nations. In 1923 Canada negotiated her own treaty with the U.S.A. on a domestic matter of fisheries and her action was accepted as correct at the Imperial Conference of 1926.

It was in this year that a definition of Dominion Status emerged for the first time and it was declared that Dominions were "in no way subordinate to one another in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs." The Draft Declaration of the 30th March 1942, in speaking of a new Indian Union "which shall constitute a Dominion," elaborates the proposed status for India in almost identical terms. It is therefore

perfectly clear that India as a free Dominion would have absolute control in her relations with the rest of the world, with her own diplomatic representation in any country of her choice. The whole conception of the British Commonwealth is that of a free and willing association. The bonds are not only those of cold expediency but the structure's real strength lies in a common sentiment.

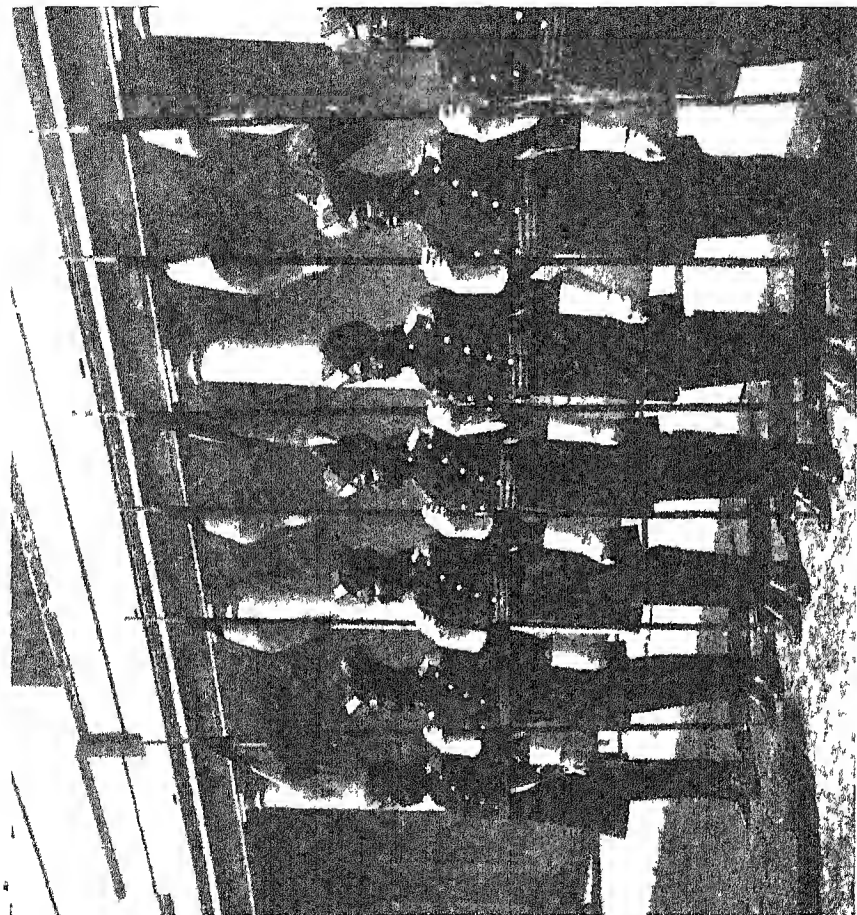
In the treaty to be concluded between India and Britain it is certain that the latter will require facilities in regard to defence matters. For years to come our traffic with Burma, the Malay Peninsula and the Far East will, for obvious reasons, be heavier than in the pre-war days of normal trade. India's position as a vast intermediate base for ships, planes and men needs no emphasis. Supply, maintenance and repair problems are reduced considerably if use can be made not only of Indian ports and aerodromes but also of the produce of India's factories and her soil. In return, India would have the full use of the armament resources of Britain for developing her own Defence Services. But such a reciprocal arrangement connotes a high degree of mutual and willing co-operation, and there must be more than the bare bones of a comprehensive written arrangement.

We will now turn to the map and take each possible situation from east to west which might confront the future India. Three types of India have been postulated and each will require separate consideration, for the conditions which dictate the foreign policy of a Dominion are obviously different from those which would apply to an independent State or a vivisected India.

We encounter first the Burma frontier. Under no circumstances can one foresee the Dominion having any reason to fear for her western border for many years to come. It may be assumed that a programme of complete reconstruction will be undertaken in Burma. Indians and British alike will hope to make good their enormous trade losses. The entire administrative machinery will need re-establishment and rejuvenation. All this will never be achieved if Burma is to be thrown immediately into a period of tangled political dispute with the public mind preoccupied with elections rather than with the business of setting their own house in order. The Burmese situation will urgently demand a few years of unhampered and imaginative bureaucratic control. If this is accepted, then the relations of Burma and an Indian Dominion will cause no anxiety to either of the parties interested.

India divorced from the Commonwealth would also for some time to come be free from anxiety, since one cannot conceive the post-war British Burma wishing to pick a quarrel with an independent neighbour, even though diplomatic relations could hardly be markedly cordial with the dominating elements of an Indian Republic.

Turning north, hundreds of miles over the hills, the national expression of millions of Chinese will be centred on the great task of rebuilding and reuniting a ravished China. The policy of an independent India to China would be one of active sympathy and co-operation, and there is no reason to suppose that the policy of a Dominion need be less accom-



*The Viceroy's Bodyguard.*

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A Punjab village turns out for a war meeting

modating. On China's part, she might prefer to deal with a unit divorced from the British Commonwealth, for the Chungking Government have always been in close sympathy with India's national aspirations. But China will be far too concerned with her own reconstruction, and the whole idea of war between China and India, whatever status the latter may assume, is unthinkable in an era of post-war weariness.

The conclusion is that while India's eastern frontier now commands the attention of the world, in the years ahead a re-orientation will develop by which, once again, the focus of India's foreign policy, with its concomitant considerations of defence, will move again to the North-West.

We turn to Nepal, and the question immediately arises whether the Nepalese Government would wish to continue to be bound by the treaty of friendship under which India now enjoys the services of many battalions of magnificent fighting men from Nepal. As a Dominion India could probably extend the present arrangements. But Nepal would almost certainly terminate the treaty with an independent India or any alternative form of Government.

Moving further west, the particular position of Kashmir cannot be ignored. I do not intend here to open up the problem of the States and our complex treaty relations with them. But geographically Kashmir is so placed as to be an important factor in defence considerations. The Draft Declaration lays down that treaty revision with the States will be necessary; for in no other way can the States become intelligent members of the Union. It further asserts that "Whether or not an Indian State elects to adhere to the Constitution, it will be necessary to negotiate a revision of its treaty arrangements, so far as this may be required in the new situation."

The implication is that a State, if it so desires, need not elect to adhere to the new India, in which case it must presumably negotiate its own treaty direct with the Crown. In the case of Kashmir, with an Indian Dominion on its southern boundary, the situation is once again that of two members of the same family with a common frontier, and thus defence considerations would not arise. But Kashmir's position becomes one of great embarrassment if either an independent India or a Pakistan area borders her territory; for in negotiating a treaty with the Crown the latter would find it impossible to include any guarantee of immunity from attack involving armed assistance.

In turning to the North-West Frontier, we meet the full significance of possible events. An Indian Dominion could claim and certainly receive a degree of assistance in the organization, equipment and training of her armed forces to meet requirements. It is even conceivable that the Dominion might request the strengthening of her Field Army by a leavening of British troops. All these considerations would be matters for treaty settlement. But an independent Union must stand on its own legs.

At this point considerations of foreign policy become more obscure, for now the element of the relationship between an independent State and the Punjab calls for attention. The relations of a united independent



India with both Afghanistan and the Moslem Provinces of the North-West would demand the most delicate handling and the greatest tact. The Union must draw its Field Army largely from the martial races of the Punjab and any twist in the orientation of relations between the Punjab and the Central Government, or any attempt to implement an antagonistic policy towards Afghanistan, might drive the Punjab into an understanding with Kabul, with the emergence of a Pakistan of the greater model of tradition.

If, as is possible, the Provinces of Sind, the North-West Frontier Province and the Punjab, under Clause (C) (i) of the Draft Declaration, do not wish to accede to the new Union, whether that Union be a Dominion or otherwise, then they will become responsible for their own defence.

An Indian Pakistan then emerges which presumably would take advantage of the facilities of the Declaration to accept a new Constitution in direct treaty relationship with Britain. In these circumstances the new State with the port of Karachi at its disposal should be fully capable of its own defence, even if called upon to defend both its western and eastern frontiers. So long as there is access to the sea the power of Britain would be at hand.

In days gone by foreign policy has had occasion to take heed of Russia. Whatever shape other national destinies assume, the post-war victorious Russia will be immensely powerful. It will matter little whether an Indian Union is harnessed to the British Commonwealth or not. It will behove that Union to keep on friendly terms with Russia. There is an analogy in the traditional policy of Canada. Canada, being one of the greater shareholders in the British Commonwealth, could, if she required it, call on the armed might of Britain to assist her in a conflict with the United States. Nevertheless, such assistance in practice would be extremely difficult to proffer, so that Canada has deliberately adopted a policy of friendly accommodation to her powerful neighbour. She has known that along her 3,000-mile border the United States of America could strike with overwhelming force against her vital centres long before any external aid could be effective.

In exactly the same way an antagonized Russia could neutralize India in the post-war world before effective help from overseas could reach her ports. The North-West Army of a future India, however gallant, could hardly hold up a modern Russian Army, rich in recent experience, if that Army was really set on conquest.

Russia has renounced all claims to internal interference in foreign countries and the Third International has been dissolved. The Communist Party of India is now recognized and is likely to improve its position at the polls in the next elections. Where previously there was much suspicion of communist activities, to-day there is a frank understanding. From my own observation of the few real communists who circulate in the villages of the Eastern Punjab they have impressed me with their genuine desire to improve rural living conditions. I can see no reason why either a Dominion or an independent Union need have difficulty in

maintaining a friendly diplomacy with Russia, and the only circumstances under which considerations of defence arise would be in a problematical situation in which Russia's possible sympathies with an independent Union might clash with an intervening Pakistan Dominion of the North-West.

Moving south down the frontier, the areas of Sind and Baluchistan can hardly develop individual policies sufficient to create situations of embarrassment. Much must depend on the degree to which the future India develops her trade with the nations of Persia, Iraq, Arabia and the African coast. If there is a free flow of exports and imports through the port of Karachi, this will act as an incentive for firm relations between Sind and the future Indian Government.

We turn to the sea coast of 3,000 miles. Consideration of land frontiers at least confines discussion to the simple limits of India's neighbours. But the sea knows no limit, and from her shores, India is liable to attack from any quarter of the globe. It is obvious that a Union which can call on the protection of the British Navy will have little to fear. But should a Union decide on a status outside the British Commonwealth, it must build its own Navy. The Royal Indian Navy in its present stage, without cruisers or a battleship, would be hopelessly inadequate to deal with an attack from a major power. Hostile naval action would possibly be exerted in an effort to cover the landing of ground forces. It would seem inevitable that as a price of independence in any form, whether it be that of full Dominion status or complete independence, the presence and strength of the British Navy will be the dictating factor to the future Government of India in developing foreign policy outside the sphere of her immediate neighbours on land. Where, for instance, is the Indian Navy of independence going to turn for her ships? It is conceivable that India may build small ships. It is very doubtful if she could build big ships with their modern wealth of technical equipment.

The same conditions pertain in consideration of air power. India could buy the highly complex instruments of precision now required for aerial warfare; but for a long time to come she will be unable to make them.

If all technical equipment must come from abroad, it follows that Indian security through home-made resources would be largely dependent on the good will of Britain who, with her Navy, could at any time effect a complete blockade. It would seem a matter of practical expediency for Britain and independent India to remain on terms of mutual co-operation and harmony.

There is, however, one possible development of the future which, if exploited by a hostile Indian Government, might create tension, with serious embarrassment to Britain. An Indian Dominion would draw on Britain for all technical assistance. Such assistance would be readily appreciated and willingly offered. Independent India is tied by no such mutual obligation. It is free to develop relations equally with a defeated Germany or a victorious Russia. It is conceivable that such a Government, if under the influence of those who have come to abhor the British

connection, might turn to the best available markets in the world both for technical equipment and personal instruction.

The history of India in the nineteenth century furnished many examples of English and French adventurers gaily selling their services to the highest bidder. In certain circumstances, it would seem that analogous situations might again arise, frustrated political leaders seeking the cheapest market; and the search need take no heed of former friend or foe. Complementary to such a situation in India, in Europe there will be many thousands of adventurers, soldiers, sailors and airmen, technicians seeking an outlet for their talent denied them in their own countries. It would be only natural that such an army of unemployed should find their way to India and underbid the Englishman in the open market. Will it after all be so essential for an independent Indian Union to be for ever playing the tune called by the piper in Westminster?

If it be conceded that the independent Union could command professional skill and advice from the countries of Europe, against this must be set a doubt as to the ability of such a Union to control those internal resources of man-power which Britain can command to-day. The accusation of the employment of a mercenary army is fully examined in the next chapter. Here it is only mooted as a practical proposition for Indian leaders to consider, whether the men whom we now term "the martial classes," and who have proved their worth alongside the world's modern armies when owing their allegiance to a nebulous, unseen power centred round a distant Imperial throne, will in fact give that same loyalty to an independent Union striving to full nationhood?

There are steps to nationhood just as there are steps to responsible Government. We may admit then that possibly the best fighters in the land are not so educationally prepared for a sweeping political change involving a complete re-orientation of their loyalties as are their more sophisticated brothers. This is to put the matter politely. But if it be true, could India afford to forgo the services of such magnificent men for her defence? For the risk that such men will not co-operate in the India moulded on the model of extreme Congress thought is very real.

An Indian Dominion will want to know the degree to which her armed forces are committed to participation in a crisis involving the interests of either Britain or the whole Commonwealth. The issue of the neutrality of a Dominion in a British war has never been solved. It is perhaps as well to avoid precise definition and leave decisions to sentiment and the exercise of public opinion at the time.

In the past the decision of England has been the needs of Empire, which have required no rules or regulations. With the recent exception of Eire and a small reluctant element in South Africa decisions have been the will of a united family. Is it too much to expect that an Indian Union which elects to free membership of the great association might not also wish to throw her resources into the common pool in times of danger to the family as a whole? I can think of many elements in the country who will most certainly make it their business to see that the

moral obligations as well as the privileges of membership are accepted by the Indian Union.

Defence is a loose term, embracing at times the whole conception of the administration, supply, finance and training of armed forces. Here I have limited speculation to strategy and its bearing on foreign relations, which, reduced to simple terms, is the business of keeping the enemy from India's frontiers. But certain salient features of broad administration which are peculiar to India call for comment. There is the unique position by which the potential man-power is situated in the North-West while industrial power is in the East. Men without guns are possibly more effective than guns without men. I leave it to the reader to develop such conclusions as he may.

There are interesting features when one reviews financial implications. In the past there has been much claim and counter-claim. Ever since the Mutiny India has paid capitation charges for British troops maintained on Indian soil. These payments have been to meet the cost of the training of British soldiers and airmen who serve a part of their time in India. Starting at £10 per head in post-Mutiny days, they have fluctuated, and from 1924 onwards amounted to annual payments by India of £1,400,000, while at times the War Office have registered counter-claims amounting to as much as £4,500,000 per annum.<sup>1</sup>

In 1932 a Tribunal under the chairmanship of Sir Robert Garran was set up to examine and report on the validity of conflicting claims. The task of the Tribunal really amounted to a decision as to the extent the employment of British troops in India could be regarded as for Imperial or purely Indian purposes. The Tribunal recorded the opinion that so far from India's contribution being increased it should in effect be cancelled by a subvention by the British Government of £1,500,000 per annum. At the beginning of the present war the subvention was increased to £2,000,000 as a result of the report of the Committee set up under Lord Chatfield's chairmanship. That Committee at the same time made sweeping recommendations covering the cost of bringing the Army-in-India up to date in mechanization and equipment. The greater burden of the capital cost of the programme was to be borne by the British Government.

The whole situation will need reconsideration if British troops are not maintained in India under a new Constitution. As a governing factor there would then only remain the simple principle that, as a Dominion, India should pay for whatever services she received from the United Kingdom. An Indian Dominion, if it is to be worthy of its freedom and status, must accept all financial responsibility for the training, equipment and maintenance of its Defence Services, a liability which includes a Navy and an Air Force.

In the past India has paid Britain a token sum of £100,000 for the services of the British Navy in an emergency. In contrast the Indian

<sup>1</sup> Statistical information is taken from *A Constitutional History of India*, by Professor A. Keith (Chapter X, Sec. 15), and the *Indian Year Book*, 1939-40. A fuller summary of the financial problems, with details, is given in *India and Democracy*. (See Footnote <sup>1</sup>, page 93.)

Naval Budget of a Dominion will be counted in many crores. The same considerations apply to the Indian Air Force.<sup>1</sup>

In assessing defence expenditure and what in the past has been termed "the burden of the military budget" a very real misrepresentation is always given prominence. The annual military expenditure is expressed as a percentage only of Central Revenues. As such it has figured as an amount varying between 40 and 50 crores,<sup>2</sup> a sum which when spoken of as a half of the revenues of the country certainly seems formidable. But the taxpayer is taxed both as a citizen of India and of his Province and the provincial budget is in no way concerned with military expenditure. The only fair assessment is to calculate the percentage on the total of the central and provincial revenues.

Soldiers are drawn from at least five Provinces in India, so that the taxpayer in those Provinces is but paying his share for men who are being housed, fed, paid and trained for his defence. In the case of the other Provinces who have in the past contributed little or nothing in man-power towards India's defence, the return on their money in the form of insurance from external aggression must represent as low a premium as could be paid by any country in the world.

In reviewing these matters situations have been considered which might to some appear unduly imaginative. In a world which is weary of war men will be seeking a new international ideal. It could be said that even to postulate highly hypothetical situations of liaison or antagonism is to encourage the perpetuation of the war mentality. So far as relations between Britain and India are concerned, my view is that whatever Constitution may emerge, whether it be one of complete independence or of a free Dominion or whether there be multiple constitutions of different loyalties and variety, there will be born a latent measure of mutual good will to ease the tensions of past misunderstanding. The roots of two hundred and fifty years are deep, and there are many men in high places who will turn naturally to Britain as a reserve of final strength and advice.

The present political circumstances are no guide to the final reactions of Indian political thought and one is therefore sanguine of eventual adjustment in defence matters being achieved in a smooth process of mutual trust.

Nevertheless it is the duty of Indians to ponder these matters now. In a democratic world, Governments come and go and the fast treaties of to-day are scraps of paper to-morrow. This is the experience of defence experts whose duty it is to advise their cabinets on the measures demanded for the security of a nation. It is in this spirit only that these thoughts for to-morrow have taken expression.

<sup>1</sup> In March 1945 the King approved the new title of "The Royal Indian Air Force."

<sup>2</sup> Before the war Defence Expenditure amounted to 29 per cent of the total of Central and Provincial revenues and 54 per cent of the Central revenue only.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE ARMY AND ITS SOLDIERS

THE STORY OF THE INDIAN ARMY HAS STILL TO BE WRITTEN, FOR AS YET we have nothing to compare with Fortescue's monumental *History of the British Army* in twenty-four volumes.<sup>1</sup> That is a task for which the Public Relations Directorate is preparing. Publications such as *The Tiger Strikes* paint vividly the Army's exploits while they are fresh in the mind; and from these will be built up the official record of the part of the Indian Army.

This chapter therefore aims only at painting in the background against which the present epic story may be viewed. The need for appreciating the Indian soldier and his place in the pattern of Indian life is urgent. On the one hand political aspiration would often exploit his deeds for the advancement of its own cause. In its simplest form the argument amounts to an assertion that, because the sepoy has fought bravely, India deserves a reward for services rendered in the form of Independence. I suggest that no community would be more surprised to learn that they were the champions of political aspiration than the men of the Fourth Indian Division.

On the other hand it is sought to establish that the martial classes are a myth and that the Indian soldier is but a poor mercenary, bribed to service by the lure of good pay. I shall try to put both these suppositions in their true perspective. But to understand better the real nature of this great fighting machine we should first glance at the manner in which it has taken shape.

In the middle of the seventeenth century the East India Company had established trade on the Madras Coast, in Bengal under Job Charnock, and at Surat north of Bombay. They had their godowns and factories and these had to be guarded. The ancestors of the Indian Army might therefore be regarded only as chowkidars (i.e., watchmen). It was obvious that by grouping them in companies, giving them a uniform and a loose form of discipline, they would work more efficiently than when left to their own haphazard ways.

In those days Bombay took precedence over the other two areas and Calcutta was but a village when the island of Bombay boasted ten thousand inhabitants. Early Bombay history took curious turns. Charles II received the island as part of the dowry of Catherine of Braganza from the Portuguese, an unimpressive gift of a few tropical islets with jungles sheltering the whole range of wild life from the tiger downwards. Sir Abraham Shipman, who set out to take possession

<sup>1</sup> There is of course Major G. F. Macmunn's *Armies of India*. There is an excellent history of the Bombay Army by Sir Patrick Caddell and I have recently seen a very comprehensive little book, *India's Army*, by Major D. Jackson (publishers, Sampson Low), which gives detailed information of every unit. This chapter was written before I had read *Martial India* by the late Major F. Yeats-Brown. (See Chapter XX.)

found, however, that the local Portuguese, who had received no orders of the transaction, were not for a moment handing over their property. Poor Sir Abraham had therefore to sail up and down the coast disconsolately, and of his original force eventually only a remnant landed at Bombay in 1665.<sup>1</sup>

In 1668 King Charles, discovering his dowry more of a liability than an asset, handed it over to the East India Company for ten pounds with its garrison of three hundred, of whom about one-third were Portuguese and French deserters. For many years we held a precarious footing on the island and raised Companies of English, Portuguese, French, Indian Christians and a few Dekhanis. None of these could claim the status of units of any permanency. The Company trade expansion in Bombay in these years hung fire, for inland the Mahrattas and the Mogul Viceroy of Ahmedabad were fighting it out and on the coast the Company generally played a double game of conciliation with both sides, with a slight bias to the Mogul power. For these reasons the Bombay Army was slow to get into its stride and the Bengal and Madras Armies continued to expand while their Cinderella sister was finding her feet. Meanwhile the Company's affairs in its other two spheres were going ahead and it was Madras that gave birth to the first formed unit of the Indian Army.

It is difficult to say exactly what was the first unit of the Indian Army, for many units have come and gone since those early days. But of those now on the list, the honour of being the oldest existing unit must go to the present 1/1st Madras Pioneers, raised in 1758 at Fort St. George, Madras, from independent Companies of coast defence sepoy. It lived for a long time as the 1st Madras Infantry, became the 61st K.G.O. Pioneers in 1903 and assumed its present title in 1922. It was disbanded in 1932 with all the other Pioneer battalions only to be re-raised in the present war.

Three Armies therefore emerged, in Bombay, Madras and Bengal, each with its own Commander-in-Chief, its own administration and ancillary services. For a long time organization was only on a "Company" basis and as late as 1759, two years after the Battle of Plassey, there were but six regular battalions, all in the Madras Army. Previous to this the Madras Army had had a precarious passage, its very existence being challenged by the French Army under the great Dupleix. With their established battalion organization and greater resources, the French nearly eclipsed the Company and it was not until the redoubtable Stringer Lawrence landed at Fort St. David in 1748 and took command of the Company forces that, with the stout assistance of Robert Clive and Eyre Coote, the French were held. In 1793, with the fall of Pondicherry, the French power came to an end. But for many years we were up against French adventurers who took service all over the country.

<sup>1</sup> Of the original four Companies which had left England six years previously, the remnants were banded together as a European Regiment under the East India Company and became the Bombay Fusiliers, from which they finally developed into the Second Battalion of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers.

Not a few came over and joined us, while others such as Perron and de Boigne fought under the Mahratta banner of the Maharaja Scindia of Gwalior.

In 1795 the Bengal Army boasted twenty-four battalions, the Madras Army was of almost equal size, while the Bombay Army only mustered eight battalions, battalions being coupled as Regiments.

The end of the eighteenth century in India seemed to betoken for the British the parting of the ways. Central India was in chaos. For several years the great Mahratta chiefs, Holkar and Scindia, had been either fighting the Nizam of Hyderabad or fighting each other; and the Governor-General, Lord Mornington,<sup>1</sup> with vision and determination, saw that British interests must either be established for permanency or be swallowed up in the general confusion. It was perhaps the one period of the Indian connection to which the slogan "Govern or get out" might truthfully be applied. Thus there followed those two rather neglected Mahratta wars of 1800 to 1804 and 1817 to 1819.

The first Mahratta War was largely an affair of the Bengal Army. We were really at war from the time that Scindia, with his army led by Perron, challenged us in 1798. He was finally broken by General Wellesley<sup>1</sup> at Lassawaree and Assaye, and the blind Mogul Emperor Shah Alam was thus freed from Mahratta domination. Of the Bengal Army which took part in that war only four units now remain. These are Skinner's Horse (1st Cavalry), the 4/1st Punjab Regiment (formerly the 1st Brahmans), the 2/7th Rajput Regiment (formerly the 4th Prince Albert Victor's Rajputs) and the 1/7th Rajput Regiment (formerly the 2nd Queen Victoria's Own Rajput Light Infantry). It was at this time that irregular units were added to the Army, in which men came forward with their own arms and equipment in return for a lump sum of money down, the rations being purchased by the Commanding Officer on contract from funds paid to him to cover his maintenance over a specified period.

This was the "Silladar" system of the Indian Cavalry which was in operation until after the war in 1918. Under this system a man came along with his horse and a subscription of two hundred and fifty rupees. He purchased his own kit, which was usually that of a discharged sowar, at a price fixed by a committee. The system was obviously not practical for a war beyond India's shores but it had many attractive features. A soldier knowing, for instance, that at the end of his service he would receive a committed price for his kit, and having himself to pay for any shortages, was obviously particularly careful of his saddlery and equipment. A modern commander would be grateful for some such arrangement in connection with vehicle maintenance! But perhaps the most noticeable feature of the old system was its great simplicity, and invariably the applicable paragraph of an operation order, which to-day includes all contingencies, was limited to the comment "The Silladar Cavalry

<sup>1</sup> Lord Mornington, later created Marquis Wellesley. General Wellesley (brother of Lord Mornington) later created Duke of Wellington.



will make its own arrangements." The only unit still on a Silladar basis is the Bombay Bodyguard.

At the time and for their purpose the irregular units in no way suffered as compared with Regulars. In regular battalions promotion was disgracefully slow and we read of Subadars and Jemadars on the active list when over seventy years old. The irregular units had the advantage of the encouragement of initiative and the forcing of responsibility on British and Indian officers, experience which stood them in good stead when on active service. But the maintenance of such units becomes a problem on service overseas, particularly when British and Indian units serve together, and therefore had to be abandoned in general administrative interests.

We are apt to think of the overseas employment of India's forces as being confined to 1914 and 1939. In actual fact, Indian forces went to Manila against Spain in 1762, took Ceylon from the Dutch in 1795, took Mauritius and Bourbon from the French in 1810, and Java from the Dutch in 1811. Later they participated in expeditions to Abyssinia, China and Persia. But they were not employed in the South African War. In those early exploits the Bombay and Madras Armies were prominent and the Bengal Army only figured in the Java Campaign of 1811.

Those with an eye to academic research will, alongside the bare bones of battles and dates and figures, note details such as the development of dress. The Company's soldiers fought invariably in European uniform, and old prints depict the Bengal Horse Artillery dressed up in colour and trappings looking like Ruritanian Hussars. The Infantry wore scarlet tunics, tight-fitting white breeches and black shakos made of cloth over a wicker frame. The regular Cavalry were in French grey and the three regular Madras Cavalry Regiments have clung to their grey ever since. These are the present 7th, 8th and 16th Light Cavalry Regiments.

We had traced events up to the first Mahratta War which lingered on into 1805. In 1817 matters again came to a head with the Mahrattas. The treaties which we had concluded with them limited their depredations and were entirely opposed to generations of traditional existence on the principle of "*jiski lathi uski bains*."<sup>1</sup> There were also now at their disposal vast hordes of discharged bands of adventurers from the Mogul Armies, soldiers without leaders, only too ready to serve anyone who would pay them well; and so the Company took the field again against 100,000 Cavalry of the Pindaris, 70,000 Infantry and 500 guns. Once again there were two Armies, the Grand Army of Lord Moira,<sup>2</sup> the Governor-General (this being the Bengal Army), and the Bombay Army from the Deccan under Sir Thomas Hislop. There followed those battles round Poona, Kirkee and Koregaon over ground on which the Poona and Ahmednagar garrisons now fight out tank battles in their training. They were characterized by small forces of the Bombay

<sup>1</sup> "He who has the stick controls the buffalo"; hence "Might is right."

<sup>2</sup> Later Marquis of Hastings.

Army invariably attacking vast hordes of Mahrattas with considerable success, their audacity always giving them surprise. This was the first occasion on which the Bombay Army had really been extended and the Poona Horse received its baptism of fire while the battalion now known as the 2/4th Bombay Grenadiers fought the battle of Koregaon against the greater bulk of the Peshwa's Army. In the Bengal Army Skinner's Horse and the 2nd Royal Lancers came in for long periods of hard fighting. With the conclusion of the Second Mahratta War there was a period of comparative peace and wars left the south of India, never to return.

In 1824 the opportunity came for the first time to sort out the three Armies on some basis of uniformity, each Army however maintaining its separate identity. The double battalion system was abolished and armies were renumbered by single battalions according to the dates on which they were raised. The King's forces and those of the Company served alongside each other. The Bengal Army now mustered sixty-eight Infantry battalions, eight Regiments of Light Cavalry and five of irregular Cavalry. The Madras forces were little behind, and the Bombay Army boasted twenty-four battalions with three Regiments of Light Cavalry.

We pass to 1839 and the story of one of the stupidest wars in history, the result of an attempt to bolster up an unwanted and incompetent Amir, Shah Shuja, in Afghanistan. The Afghans having ejected him, we attempted to put him back and in doing so concluded a tripartite Treaty with the Amir and Ranjit Singh who then ruled the Punjab. Being uncertain of our advance through the Punjab to Kabul, we decided to enter by the Quetta-Kandahar route, with a Division of the Bengal Army, a large contingent of the Bombay Army and Shah Shuja's own force of six thousand men raised in India. At first all went well and we settled into Kabul and I believe, true to tradition, built a club and a racecourse ! There followed the murder of our envoy and that disastrous withdrawal, the saddest page in the history of Indian military operations. One dim flicker in the darkness of humiliation was the heroic defence of Kelat by the third Infantry Regiment of Shah Shuja's force, which became successively the 12th Regiment of Infantry, the 12th Pioneers, and finally the 2/2nd Bombay Pioneers. The only immediate result of this chapter of disasters was the annexation of Sind by the Bombay Government.

We pass to 1845 and the first Sikh War and we require to note that it was a campaign only of the Bengal Army which fought under Sir Hugh Gough. In the second affray with the Sikhs in 1848 the Bengal Army once again fought the Company's battles, though it was a reinforcing Bombay Brigade which took Multan. It was between the two Sikh campaigns that in order to bolster up the young Maharaja Dulip Singh, who had succeeded on the death of Ranjit Singh, the Punjab Irregular Force was raised in the Jullundur area, which later, with new commitments across the Indus, became the Punjab Frontier Force and has handed down to posterity some of our finest fighting units, of which any army

in the world would be proud. That portion of the Frontier Force which was raised at Jullundur in 1846 is to-day the 12th Frontier Force Regiment with its several battalions. In its formation the original Sikh units of the old Khalsa Army were taken over and thus the Sikh fighting tradition was continued under new masters. The new units were added in 1849, when the role of the north-west frontier protection was assumed. These are now those battalions which form the present 13th Frontier Force Rifles. The whole force from 1849 onwards came to be known as the Punjab Frontier Force.

As our hold on the frontier was established and penetration into forbidden land deepened, the role of frontier protection was spread wider and for many years the battalions of the Frontier Force have served all over India while the rigours of frontier service now fall to all units of the Army.

And so we come to the Mutiny of 1857. This is no place to examine the many contributory causes to those two bitter years. Perhaps the sad events of 1839 were remembered. Perhaps the annexation of Oudh played its part. Men were not wanting to fan unrest into flame, for round Central India there were a number of Princes deprived of their territories and the stipends which their fathers had enjoyed. One in particular, the Nana Sahib, the adopted heir of an ex-Peshwa of Poona, found the soil ready for incitement to mutiny. More probable than any other reason was just stagnation and the professional apathy of officers over a number of years which had set in in the Bengal Army. For it should be clearly realized that the Indian Mutiny was an affair of the Bengal Army alone and that, with a few isolated exceptions, the Bombay and Madras Armies were unaffected. The modern Indian Army is therefore the result of the reconstruction of that portion of the Bengal Army which remained loyal, with a few of the doubtful units included and the further evolution of the other two Armies.

Immediately previous to the Mutiny, total strengths were 310,000 Indian and 39,000 British troops, a proportion of nine Indian soldiers to one British, as compared with that of three to one in recent times.

Of the Bengal Army the greater proportion before the Mutiny was composed of Rajput, Brahman and Moslem clans from Oudh and Bihar, leavened by a few Moslems and Sikhs from the Punjab. Classes and castes were mixed indiscriminately in companies. Almost the whole of the Bengal Army went in the debacle, a notable exception being the 31st Bengal Infantry at Saugor, which operated with vigour against two mutineer regiments and which is now the 17th Rajput Regiment. Of the seventy Bengal line Regiments, only fifteen may be said to have remained loyal, and of their old regular Cavalry none now remain on the Army List. Thus the traditional "Bengal Lancers" were all raised from the Punjab and the United Provinces after the Mutiny.<sup>1</sup>

To deal with the situation an irregular Army was hastily raised in the Punjab; and under such astonishing men as Henry Lawrence and

<sup>1</sup> It should be realized that at that time the Bengal Presidency included nearly the whole of India, excluding the Madras and Bombay Presidencies.

John Nicholson,<sup>1</sup> a Punjab Army marched south and the historic siege of Delhi perhaps confirmed that British leadership, though dormant for several years, was in a crisis still at hand. It was this irregular Punjab Army which, together with eighteen units of the old Bengal Army, formed the new Bengal Army after the Mutiny. The old units were numbered consecutively as such, while the new units were allotted from the number 19 onwards. Thus it comes about that the present 14th, 15th and 16th Punjab Regiments were all formed from the old Punjab battalions which numbered 19 to 33 and they were all raised in 1857; and thus also it came about that the new Bengal Army had extremely little to do with the men of Bengal.

The Crown at last assumed its long overdue responsibilities and superseded the Company control immediately after the Mutiny; yet the three Presidency Armies still continued to function as such, though amalgamation was actually mooted in 1858. In the conditions prevailing the decision to continue as separate functioning Armies was probably wise. Internal communications in India were undeveloped and communication with England was laborious before the days of the Suez Canal. It is of academic interest to note that the new Punjab Frontier Force remained until 1886 under the direct control of the Government of the Punjab.

For a long time there were 45 battalions of the Bengal Army, the Gurkha battalions which had been on its list being withdrawn and renumbered on their own list. Of the pre-Mutiny Bengal Cavalry Regiments only eight were retained and these were renumbered as the 1st to the 8th Bengal Cavalry. There were then added 11 irregular Cavalry regiments from the Punjab, the total making 19 Cavalry Regiments on the Bengal Cavalry list. The Punjab Frontier Force had in the meanwhile raised five Cavalry Regiments of its own.

It was at this time that a decision was taken to abolish the Indian Artillery, with the exception of four mountain batteries of the Frontier Force.

The Madras and Bombay Armies remained comparatively unaffected by these changes, but by a curious arrangement the Bengal Army now came under the orders of a Commander-in-Chief responsible to the new Government of India.

From now onwards there were continued adjustments in the armed forces. Several Regiments of the Bombay and Madras Armies were, for instance, reconstructed with Baluchis, Pathans and Punjabis; for campaigns in Abyssinia, Burma and elsewhere had revealed weak spots in certain local classes which the two Armies had hitherto enlisted. Thus it is that the present 2nd and 8th Punjab Regiments, with their conventional Punjab class composition, started life as portions of the Madras Army with a Madras class composition. Another innovation was the abandonment of the mixing of classes and castes within units and the adoption of a class-company basis, though the Gurkhas and certain Sikh battalions which had from the beginning been on a class-battalion basis, continued

<sup>1</sup> Lawrence raised the forces, which Nicholson led.

as such. The solid progress made was fully evident when in 1878 we were again at war with Afghanistan, this time under a leader of skill, courage and personal magnetism. The inspiration of Lord Roberts's leadership<sup>1</sup> has lived on into modern times and *Fortyone years in India* is, of its type, a classic with which any officer who serves in India should be familiar.

In 1895 the long-awaited reform realized achievement and the three Presidency Armies, with their separate Commanders, became an Army of India, the Bengal Army dividing into two portions, the whole thus forming four commands under one Commander-in-Chief. Renumbering, however, was not yet accomplished and there were no less than six units claiming to the number "one" of a series !

The renumbering of the Indian Army on to one list had to wait until the arrival of Lord Kitchener in 1903. Kitchener rightly felt that until units appeared in a logical sequence on one list, a full sense of the unity of an Army would not be realized. We should note his achievement and, with it, his reforms in general, for they were the result of much careful thought and ingenuity. There was a certain amount of opposition, for numbers often receive a traditional value which dies hard. Yet titles and battle honours are the real treasures of regimental history and great care was taken when a number was changed to replace it with a title. And so at last the units of the three old Presidency Armies, the Punjab Frontier Force and the Hyderabad Contingent came on to one numerical list.

I am tempted to follow Kitchener's reforms in the spheres of administration and organization; for it is not too much to say that he created an Army of formations to meet all situations where hitherto there had been but guess-work. But my object has been only to persuade the reader that behind a thousand scattered heroisms in the desert, on the Italian peaks or in the jungles of Burma there is a background, a scene in rich colour which cannot be painted out by the chameleon-like nature of the Indian Constitution.<sup>2</sup>

It is here that we must face an issue. It has been argued that in building the Army we have but offered a good wage and tapped a source of labour, exploiting eternal human weakness. Our Army, it is said, is mercenary. What exactly is a mercenary? My dictionary defines it as "one actuated by the love of money or gain." If so, a soldier is surely no different from any other mortal who seeks common self-preservation. Three-quarters of the human race are mercenaries and the fact that the Indian soldier is loyal to his employer at least connotes that he receives a square deal ; a deal in fact which, with his limited experience and education, he would not receive from any alternative quarter. There is nothing whatsoever to prevent a Rohtak Jat, if he wants to, from taking service in the local cotton mills. That he goes to the Army only means

<sup>1</sup> This is not to overlook the part played by the Commander, Sir Donald Stewart, who conducted operations, and who immediately preceded Lord Roberts as C.-in-C. in India.

<sup>2</sup> Figures of Indian war casualties 1939-44 are given in Appendix I.

that he goes to a better master and represents a mild tribute to a soldier's life as directed by generations of British experience.

In so far as he is a patriot I have every sympathy for your Indian nationalist, though I regard his loyalties as muddled. He would, I conceive, state his case in some such terms as follows :—

“To hold India in subjection,” he would say, “you offer good pay to the uneducated agriculturist and bribe him to your service. You do not take those whom you choose to classify as of the non-martial classes, because these will not degrade themselves by taking service under foreign direction.”

To this an officer of the Indian Army might reply :—

“I am not concerned with the political aspect and I leave that for you to fight out with Mr. Amery. In regard to the Army the only interest you have ever displayed in it is in attempts to encourage alleged grievances and thus undermine its discipline and loyalty. If you will visit it in a purely objective spirit of inquiry, I venture that you will see a great nation-building edifice, based on traditions older and more deeply rooted than those of any institution in the country. You will see men happy and healthy; and a very grave responsibility rests on him who would dare to destroy that state of mind and physique in the absence of any adequate alternative.

“If you care to co-operate and learn something about this great machine, it can one day be yours; an integral and vital limb in the body politic of India. As for our alleged discrimination between martial and non-martial classes, we simply go wherever men offer their services. If in our search certain classes or areas come forward while others do not, that is essentially an Indian affair.”

Our conclusion is simple. It amounts only to the fact that in the areas where men come forward those men make better soldiers than men from other areas where they hang back.

To put it in a nutshell, we may suppose a most improbable situation. Imagine that an Indian General of the future, any one of the many fine Indian unit Commanders of to-day, is faced with the choice of commanding two Armies for the defence of India; the one of four divisions composed of Sikhs, Punjab Moslems, Rajputs, Gurkhas or any of the classes which comprise the fighting units of the modern Army; the other of twenty divisions drawn from any other areas in the country. He could, for example, draw on the registered membership of the Indian National Congress between the ages of eighteen and twenty or the student community of the great universities of Bombay and Calcutta. Which of those two Armies do you suppose the Indian General would choose?

Here we will leave our Indian nationalist and our British officer arguing the General's dilemma. No Indian or British Commander will doubt his choice; and with it breaks down the whole conception of those millions of bayonets which Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru might or might not

have raised in the different circumstances under which he contemplated his co-operation. In my personal opinion it was a great conception and one that, with the march of time, may yet come to maturity; for with comprehensive controlled education anything can be achieved. But Armies, any more than nations, cannot be created overnight, a reality so difficult of appreciation by those who are not in constant touch with military affairs: and in this case, a vast number would have been without arms or equipment.<sup>1</sup>

I make these assertions with no unkind intention to disparage the student community. But the very advantages of their education have psychologically unsuited them to accept the limitations of discipline, the foundation of all military achievement. The preference for certain classes in the Army is but a matter of interpreting the established evolution of the four main caste divisions of Aryan India, so far as Hindus are concerned.

The historians assure us that an indigenous Dravidian race was invaded by a fair-skinned Aryan race from the central Asian spaces and that for long periods between 4000 and 2000 B.C. the Aryans poured in over the north-west passes. The ethnologists still fight over the exact cradle of the Aryans, some claiming a more European home, while others prefer the banks of the River Oxus. One branch, that over which Hitler has shown so much concern, moved to the west, while others wandered east, overrunning the Indian Continent through a thousand years, yet never penetrating to the extreme south.

It was in these mass migrations that, as a matter of expediency to protect and cherish the souls of the community, the Brahman organization evolved. Thus, as they tramped the deserts and wound their way over the passes, the Brahmans would chant the Vedas for their comfort, and since the science of writing was as yet unknown their rhymings would be memorized and handed on from father to son.

While the Brahmans looked to the public morality, others needed to be fighting Dravidian India for survival. Indeed it is probable that the Brahman caste over many eras was the servant of the Kshatriya or fighting clans, the material preservers needing and demanding the services of the priests. The subdued Dravidian over many generations was absorbed and turned to agriculture and trade; and so the Vaisya caste emerged, leaving the Kshatriyas free to gather round their leaders and, in the absence of fresh fields to conquer, fight each other.

It is highly dangerous to sweep the history of a millennium into a couple of paragraphs. Yet the lesson is there. It is but to show how three communities emerged and with the primitive instinct of self-preservation to drive them forward, tended not to dissipation but rather to further consolidation. This, then, is the story behind the Indian General's choice; for the Rajput and the Jat and the Sikh and

<sup>1</sup> The future status of the Indian Army was raised by the Congress President in a recent interview with the Viceroy previous to the Simla Conference, June 1945, the former's attitude being that there was a barrier between the Army and the people. This approach seems charged with petty resentment at the success which we have achieved in raising a very adequate Army, based mainly on the traditional fields of recruitment.

the Mahratta were produced not by the whim of Recruiting Officers but by historical process as old as time. To these have been added the Moslem invaders; professional fighters or they would never have been preserved.

Thus through the ages the profession of arms has become a tradition to hundreds of thousands, and if our trusteeship has in the past meant anything—and it is of the past particularly that I am thinking—then it was but natural that such trusteeship should be based on the service of men accustomed to arms and appreciating leadership in arms.

But if it be true of the present that class and caste distinctions govern the composition of the Army, what of the future? I have indicated without ambiguity that personally I have the greatest sympathy with any patriotic Indian who looks to the day when his country can command the services of a great and truly Indian Army cutting across social strata and drawn from all shades of the national life. An Army and its status and efficiency will be the hall-mark of self-respect in Indian nationhood. But I would add one essential qualification. It is this: that no sane future Government would desire, and certainly no sane existing Government should countenance, the destruction of that which already exists. Let us build by all means a new national Army; but let it rest on the solid foundations which are already there, and the permanency of which has been tested in a hundred scattered battlefields over the seas and up and down the Indian Continent.

What exactly does this wisdom entail? First, it must connote the spreading of the net wider and the popularization of the Army in the cities and schools. Secondly, it involves the gradual elimination of the class system in our organization and the indiscriminate mixing of castes and religions in the ranks. The Royal Indian Navy, a young service starting from scratch, have already achieved this with conspicuous success; and a visit to the galleys on an Indian ship is a revelation; for there will be seen the Hindu, Moslem and Sikh eating together and drawing their food from the same kitchen. In regard to the Army reform would be but returning to an old order prevalent before the Mutiny. Drastic changes always bring much heart-burning in their wake. But the Army has faced its upheavals and in modern parlance "can take it," so long as reforms build and do not destroy.<sup>1</sup>

Yet a further condition which attaches to the Army's evolution is the increasing interest and association of political leaders with the Army and its affairs. I have a feeling that, could the Congress Working Committee be taken on a comprehensive tour of the 14th Army in action, much would be done to smooth out the political exacerbations of the day!

<sup>1</sup> An Army Reorganization Committee, under the chairmanship of Lieut.-General Sir Henry Wilcox, has recently been set up. Its task is presumably to advise on the future composition and organization of the Army in view of probable changes both in India's status and a re-orientation in international relationships in the future. In addressing members of the Legislature on the 16th March 1945, the Chairman said that he had no doubt that the Commander-in-Chief's policy of complete Indianization would be attained in the peace-time Army within a reasonable period, but one of the bottle-necks was the lack of Indian officers. At present only one out of six officers was an Indian. He thought that the blame could be laid at the door of the present educational system.



Indian politicians have in the past displayed a perfectly understandable shyness for military ceremony, for uniforms, parades and the paraphernalia of soldiering. Apart from their suspicion that these things are linked to the bogey of imperialism, they share the natural timidity which any civilian experiences when faced with a formidable array of scarlet tunics at rigid "attention." But it surely is another matter to visit the Army in informal inquiry and see and share its life. I could not illustrate the matter better than by quoting from a little book, *With the 14th Army*, by a well-known Indian journalist, Mr. D. F. Karaka. Speaking of the young Indians holding the King's Commission with whom he came in contact in field operations, he says:—

"Seeing our men in action has been a most inspiring sight. Hitherto, I had looked upon our young Army boys as 'play-boys,' polished brass-buttoned show-pieces that hung round without doing anything, playing polo in the winter and leaning on club bars all the year round. They seemed such a waste of manhood in peacetime. To me they appeared to reflect all that was decadent and decaying in our nation. They seemed anachronisms in an India which thought rather in terms of satyagraha and passive resistance and mass movements, the India of Bardoli, of no-tax campaigns, of Congress rallies, of the Mahatma leading his satyagrahis to offer civil disobedience. While in no way belittling any aspect of the national struggle, I feel bound to revise my opinion about those men of ours who serve in the Army, the Navy and the Air Force of India. They have one asset which a hundred years of satyagraha does not teach—Discipline."

The writer, I hope, will understand me if in these words I read not only a very appropriate tribute to the men of his own country, but something left over for the British connection with which those men have been so closely associated. This is that same Karaka who a few years previously had written:—

"The Englishman without the gun has no dynamic presence to cause fright. Give India an army of its own, disarm every white man in the country and let us see how brave the Englishman feels in that India."<sup>1</sup>

I quote these passages only to show the metamorphosis which can take place in an Indian, on contact with the Indian Army and its affairs, without in any way prejudicing any inherent patriotism. Rightly or wrongly, many Englishmen feel that the reluctance of Indian politicians to display any inquisitive interest in the life of the Army is that they dislike to have to admit to the very evident contentment with which the Indian soldier accepts a life of alleged mental enslavement. To see Englishmen and Indians working in harmony in that strong fellowship

<sup>1</sup>*Out of Dust*. By D. F. Karaka.

which only the battlefield cements, hardly suits a man whose case rests on the enormities of the British influence. It is my belief that, where these sentiments dominate, they are based on a deplorable misunderstanding. In the Civil Liaison organization I had frequently to sound enlightened Indian opinion on the war and its course. Whenever I was able to overcome initial shyness and bring politicians or journalists in contact with Army life, I found nothing but a full appreciation of the great work that Britain had initiated and a desire to extend the military method to all aspects of civil life from the schoolroom onwards.

In the schools frequently lack of interest has been only due to the laziness of the authorities. The D.A.V. College in Jullundur City, which lies six miles from the local garrison, had not received a visit from a soldier within the memory of its present staff until I called on them in my "Civil Liaison" capacity. I went immediately after the celebrations of Mr. Gandhi's birthday when there had been a certain amount of street brawling, and Pandit Mehr Chand, the Principal, was not too happy over my visit. I talked to individual students and avoided anything in the nature of a crowd. I discovered them eager to discuss the facts and theories of Army life and their curiosity was later manifested in applications for commissions. The simple truth was that no one had bothered previously to make contact with them, because in peace no specific organization for such purposes exists.

The present type of Indian attaining to high rank is an asset to any Army in the world; and if, side by side with these men, the services of British officers are sought as instructors and advisers, then in partnership we are capable of adjusting and expanding the Army to changing political conditions. Already we have had much experience of the loan of British officers for instruction in the training of Indian State forces. Certain it is that if the experience of British officers is sought it will be readily proffered. The most suitable machinery to operate a loan system would seem to be some form of an Indian Staff Corps officered by picked Englishmen, volunteers, who would be required to undergo specialized training. Such men would need to be chosen not only for professional efficiency but also on a severe test of character. A preliminary knowledge of ethnography and language would be required. But no technical excellence would avail without the essential background of sympathy with the mind of India. No one will deny that that mind has many manifestations. It would be for British officers to give all aspects sympathetic recognition while essentially remaining professional soldiers.

But all these hopes and ambitions are based on one broad assumption. It is that India continues as one political Union; for once division is sanctioned, the whole future of India's Army needs re-orientation. Where, for instance, is the point in efforts to break down class and caste prejudices in Army life if we are to plan not for an Indian Army, but for a Hindu, a Moslem and probably a Sikh Army? For then, far from eliminating class prejudices, the task of the separate components, each according to its light, becomes to encourage communal distinctions;

and British officers employed in the several Indias would need to follow suit and foster parochial loyalties.

From the British point of view this is an infinitely less worthy task, though a far easier one. For example, the organization of four Moslem Divisions in a Pakistan Dominion would be a simple affair and professionally an extremely attractive proposition. Similarly, should the Sikhs ever command a Dominion State, it would be easy to re-raise the old Khalsa Army on a basis of a couple of Sikh Divisions with modern equipment and thereby create a small force as tough as any in the world. The fanning of compact racial loyalties and fanatical antagonisms in the creation of armed forces would be a part in the drama not without its allurements for an English soldier-adventurer. And yet it is that other very different picture of an eventual Army, the servant of an Indian democratic Union, on which we should place our hopes; and it is on the strength and stability of such a weapon that much of the necessary international confidence in such a Union would rest.

Perhaps one further note of warning is due; national security costs money; and if India wishes to have an effective Army she must foot the bill. Whatever political party takes power will therefore have to accept the responsibility for unpopular taxation. In all sincerity I wish any future national Government luck and the courage to face the less popular legislation which will fall to them, if they are to give the people of India the armed forces required for the protection of a vast continent.

## CHAPTER X

### THE PUNJAB AND ITS POLITICS

THE SELECTION OF A PARTICULAR PROVINCE FOR ATTENTION IN A BOOK purporting to cover the Indian Continent might seem to betoken a personal bias. Yet by the manner in which events are shaping, it is clear that the Punjab is destined to play an individual role in moulding India's future; for when others have had their say it is here in the Punjab that the Pakistan issue must finally be settled.

In speaking of that issue in April 1943 Mr. Jinnah used these words:—

"I regret to say that the Punjab has not yet played the part it ought to play and is entitled to play, because, remember, the Punjab is the corner-stone of Pakistan."

Between the regrets of Mr. Jinnah and the hopes of hundreds of friends of the Punjab it would be a bold man who would attempt to foresee the course the Province will steer within the next few years. Yet the fate of India may well be in the hands of those at the helm in Lahore, and there may be responsibilities of the gravest significance

beyond present anticipation, hanging on the decisions of the Punjab Premier and his Ministry before the passing of many months.

From the window of the Frontier Mail as it leaves Lahore on a crisp winter morning, the traveller looks out on a rather drab landscape of flat, featureless country patterned with unending wheat and cotton patches and clumps of sugar cane. Every mile or so wisps of smoke haze from a village lie heavy across the horizon in the clear morning air. Here and there between the villages are clusters where the cattle turn their groaning wheels and good clear water, the life blood of the Punjab peasantry, is channelled out into the fields.

An Englishman as he gazes out from his carriage window on a disorderly tangle of agriculture makes vague mental comparison with the neatness of his own trimmed country-side. He wonders, too, why tractor ploughs and oil pumps have not long since usurped the primitive liaison of cattle and rough fashioned wood. Up to a point he is right. But there are certain fundamental conditions he hardly appreciates. In Europe the farmer's problem is to drain his fields; not to irrigate them. In contrast, in India the zemindar has to hold the water on his soil. In the case of wheat, the staple crop of the Punjab, this involves a field being partitioned in strips every dozen yards or so, by small banks of earth. A machine plough is hardly practical if you have continually to be turning and twisting to avoid destroying your irrigation layout. Consider also the fact that the average holding runs to about five acres split into separated plots of wheat or oilseed or cane, and it is easy to see how the age-old locomotion of the all-accommodating bullock lingers on as generations go by.

In the arid areas of the South-East Punjab where the land is "*barani*," under a revolutionized system of land tenure it might be possible to experiment in true collective farming. But it should be realized that progress is not only a matter of agricultural wisdom. It also involves a new social order. In explanation, there are at least three grave disabilities waiting for bold action. First there is the fragmentation of land on inheritance. Every time a father dies, his land passes not to the eldest son but to be equally divided among all his sons. The result is that a village map showing each field and its ownership looks like a jigsaw puzzle the solution of which lies only with the *patwari*.<sup>1</sup> I have the greatest admiration for this gentleman's grasp of rural topography. To me his ancient cloth map, his record of the village and its affairs, looks like a patchwork quilt. How or when this astonishing process of fragmentation finishes, I have never discovered.

A second condition which worried me greatly was the system of hereditary lambardarship.<sup>1</sup> By this the post of headman of the village remains the privilege of one family. It works in about 50 per cent of cases, the remaining 50 per cent being senile old parasites quite incapable of playing any active part in village life.

Yet a third much-needed reform is the consolidation of land. This

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix IV. In his book, *Strangers in India* (Chapter VII), Mr. Penderel Moon gives a vivid picture of the overworked, underpaid *patwari*.

is the process by which an owner, by mutual exchange with a neighbour, gathers his various scattered plots together into one area. It is not unusual to find the property of a dozen zemindars round a village separated into 30 or 40 interwoven islands, a state of affairs which brings with it petty squabbles over water rights, besides hindering the efficient development of the soil. Consolidation plans are in hand. But progress is painfully slow since there is no compulsion and it takes nearly two years for an official to consolidate the land of one village! These are but three aspects of reform which any public-spirited citizen can take in hand through his local member of the provincial Assembly.

The system of land settlement in general was taken from the records of Ranjit Singh's administration and elaborated into a code with meticulous care by a band of conscientious British settlement officers in the eighteen-fifties. Under the system the assessed value and acreage of every owner was recorded in the faithful patwari's 20 or 30 books kept for the purpose, and these records stand as the basis of the division of land to-day. In cycles of 20 years or so a settlement officer arrives in a district and reassesses land values. The basis of land administration is therefore on firm foundations and it is in the laws of inheritance and social attachment where reform is urgent, laws which belong to the people and their code of life and which they alone can set right.

We left the Frontier Mail hurrying west across the Punjab plain from Lahore. The Ravi, the Chenab and the Jhelum rivers break up the landscape, wandering across the great expanse to join their parent Indus. In the winter from Jhelum you can look across to the north to the giant pale peaks of the Pir Panjal. The snow is holding and the great rivers then crawl along their main beds leaving tracts of fertile loam for the cultivator. Later, as the snow melts, they turn to muddy exuberance and sweep along, covering wide expanses and hurrying into the swamps which line their vague and ever-shifting banks. Once away from Jhelum the landscape takes on a fresh interest as the train climbs round the edge of the Salt Range and enters the country which perhaps nurses the hardest breed in the Continent; the Moslem clans of Awans, Janjuhas and Gakhars. Here then, in the Punjab, is as much diversity as elsewhere. A long-haired, full-grown Moslem from the Salt Range has not much in common with the little hill Dogra Rajput from Kangra with his hundred and one gods, or with the merry Jat of Rohtak. The tough Jatni women, too, share nothing with their Moslem sisters to the west, being gay and markedly efficient workers in the fields. If you want confirmation of the Province's cosmopolitan make-up, pay a visit to the Assembly in Lahore, where repartee as often as not is exchanged in three languages.<sup>1</sup> There, under the chairmanship of the veteran Moslem Jat, Sir Shahubbadin, you will see a fair cross-section of the life of the Province. On my last visit I had to listen to a Congress lady from Ambala theoretically opposing a grant of 6,000 rupees for

<sup>1</sup> English, Urdu, Punjabi.

recruiting rewards, but in fact ranging over the whole field of Indian politics. She ploughed on undismayed by a hum of disapproval through the last 15 minutes of her interminable speech, and I doubt if any of the ringleted pirates from the Multan area understood a word she said. The delight of the Assembly was then a gentleman affectionately referred to always as "Michelin." I forget his real name.

Yet in spite of this diversity the Punjab has achieved a communal harmony within the last 20 years which must be the envy of other Provinces who could boast a higher educational level. The communal harmony movement, frequently but foolishly the butt of sarcasm, has taken root and in no way is this more apparent than in the unity of the Ministry itself which functions as a team.

And here we will leave the Frontier Mail as in the evening light the low hills from Taxila<sup>1</sup> close in and we run down to the most majestic of rivers escaping from its lofty mountain nursery. This is the India of history books for the inquisitive mind; while we are concerned only with a less colourful yet intensely vital pageant of modern times.

We return then to Lahore and the Ministry to which I referred as a team. It was almost with horror that I learnt of the death of Sir Chhotu Ram in January 1945, for as Revenue Minister he was the outstanding personality in the Ministry when I left India. It is not too much to say that through his influence the Jat community to the west of Delhi continues to be regarded as an integral part of the Punjab. His hobby was his work, whether it lay in the Secretariat or in touring the country. In the latter sphere he took to delivering speeches which were seldom less than of three hours' duration. Yet he usually managed to hold his rural audiences through a torrent of Punjabi invective. For the past two years he had been busy collecting funds to back an enterprise, the Jat Mahasabha, for which he was mainly responsible. Being himself a Jat agriculturist from Rohtak, his object was to set up an organization which would appeal to Moslem, Hindu and Sikh Jats as agriculturists and thereby cut across communal distinctions. He was needing five lacs for a newspaper and propaganda and at his death must have collected about half this sum.

Starting his political career in the Congress camp, he was never the convenient "yes-man," the friend of ordered constitutional progress. He was a great patriot but never allowed his patriotism to disturb a balanced appreciation of the British connection. It is difficult to see his successor and the Punjab Premier will miss his courage and advice in resisting the forces which from many directions assail the Unionist ideal. His Jat Mahasabha is referred to by the Moslem League with veiled scorn as a "tribal" assembly of little consequence. Yet if it expands it may well become another serious obstacle for the Pakistan project.

I once asked Sir Chhotu if, in the midst of a life which was one long

<sup>1</sup> A site of intense historical interest. The ruins of three ancient cities lie scattered over the Taxila plain. They cover from the second millennium B.C. until the sixth century A.D., and were the scene of Greek, Scythian and Parthian occupation. The finest Greek-Buddhist monuments in the world are at Taxila.

exhausting rhetorical campaign, he did not need an occasional holiday. He smiled and said that moving through the villages among his people gave him a buoyancy sufficient to carry him through all the vicissitudes of health and overwork. I can conceive no more striking example of the correct application of the democratic principle. It is through such men that Government for, by and of the people is exercised.

He was fiercely agrarian in his sympathies and was the champion of the peasant in all matters of policy, whether it was taxation or war-time rationing or price fixation. His conservative approach in this respect led him into conflict with his fellow Hindu men of big business and he was not popular with the school of Sir Gokal Chand Narang, Raja Narendra Nath and others.

Here I may digress to explain a situation of some difficulty for those without intimate knowledge. The Punjab Alienation of Land Act came into force in 1901. By this legislation an owner of land was forbidden to part with his land except to another landowner. The object was to prevent the drift of land into the hands of moneylenders and classes who generally had little in sympathy with agricultural life. It is a fair generalization to say that it aimed at saving the agriculturist from the moneylender of the town to whom for generations he had been mortgaging his land. The Act stopped the rot and this together with the debt conciliation movement has practically cleared the peasantry of permanent debt. The operation of the Act demanded a clear demarcation between agricultural and non-agricultural castes and it is the stigma of being termed a scheduled "non-agriculturist" which troubles many Brahmans. A well-known Hindu of Lahore, Raja Narendra Nath, has contended that the Act has operated only to create a more dangerous parasite, the "agricultural moneylender" whose clutches are as tight as those of the recognized *shahukar*. He also claims that while a scheduled agriculturist may turn to non-agricultural professions the reverse process is impossible. Once a non-agriculturist always a non-agriculturist. While there may well be certain anomalies, the fact remains that the Act has certainly rescued the Punjab peasantry from eternal debt. Sir Chhotu Ram was of course a Jat and a scheduled agriculturist and he was therefore not popular with the Lahore capitalists. Sir Gokal Chand Narang, who with Rai Bahadur Ram Saran Das might be said to represent big business, is a scholar of wide experience. I have only met him once. He was then delivering some very sound advice to Hindu students, begging them to turn to the small wholesome professions so despised by the younger generation in their preoccupation for Government employment. I am certain that he and his community would be wise generally to associate themselves more closely with the present Unionist Administration, which through their newspaper, the *Tribune*, they now take every opportunity to criticize.

The Premier of the Punjab, Malik Khizar Hayat Khan, is an attractive figure, with not a little of the heroic about him. He succeeded his late revered father as head of the great Moslem Tiwana clan and is a landowner of considerable wealth. His father was a rugged old-

fashioned autocrat, a picturesque member of the Council of State and Colonel of the 19th K.G.O. Lancers, which includes a squadron of Tiwanas. The son has served in the family Regiment. As a politician and administrator he is still an apprentice. But he has started well, showing both courage and sympathy; and if he can steer through the usual seas of flattery, opportunism and intrigue which surge round a provincial Minister and keep what is ultimately of more value, the confidence of the people, he should be destined to lead his Province to a great future.

Sir Manohar Lal, the Finance Minister, is the scholar of the team. After a brilliant start at Cambridge, where he took double honours in economics and philosophy, he turned to law. The Punjab finances are safe in his hands and the Ministry's happy problem is not to be worried with raising money, but to know how to spend it wisely.

Sardar Baldev Singh, the Minister for Public Works and also the Sikh representative, is a newcomer to politics. He is a man of great wealth who gave up a business career to devote his time to a conscientious application of safeguarding his community, without putting communal protection too aggressively on the market.

The remaining three members are all Moslems, two of them new to office. The Ministry was as near to working in harmony as was possible in the surrounding political communal seas, and they therefore may claim a very real superiority over many other provincial areas. If one was to criticize the Ministry and the comparatively happy state of affairs which it represents, it would be to regret that with such foundations it still tends to conservative rather than imaginative progress. Sir Colin Garbett in his book, *Friend of Friend*, paints a picture of a democratic basic condition in the Punjab as compared with a feudal neighbour, the United Provinces. Nevertheless, it is not generally realized that in the Punjab 12 per cent of the owners to-day own 60 per cent of the land; and it is therefore legitimate to suggest that the big zemindars, in whose hands lies the future of the Province, could with advantage take a look round at the great world outside and note the deplorable stagnation of their rural peasantry as compared with communities both in the east and west, where education has been allowed to capture and direct progress. I have referred to a few glaring defects crying out for correction. To tackle them needs courage; the courage which can only come of eschewing personal interest and facing age-old prejudices.

The Province has in mind immense development schemes and these alone should guarantee the continued support for the Unionists. Four new irrigation projects are to be located in the basins of the rivers Jumna, Sutlej, Beas and Chenab<sup>1</sup> which should bring every dry acre of land under irrigation. Thus the great Bhakra Dam scheme on the Sutlej river will bring comparative prosperity to those wide arid areas between

<sup>1</sup> A well-known American engineer, Mr. J. Savage, is advising on these schemes. These and a fifth scheme, the Thal project with its head works at Kalabagh on the Indus, will take 15 years to complete, after which fresh irrigation schemes will not be contemplated for 75 years. The schemes include the generation of hydro-electric power on a large scale.



Rohitak and Hissar at present standing too high to hold water. The Jumna scheme is of interest in that both the Punjab and the United Provinces share the spoils and it is therefore the kind of project—as is any large inter-provincial irrigation scheme—which will make talk of provincial boundary revision seem impractical.

In April 1944 Mr. Jinnah launched his attack on the Punjab and came to Lahore. He must have expected argument and opposition, but nevertheless probably anticipated the full achievement of his object by diplomacy and his traditional political skill.

That object he defined as:—

- (i) That every member of the Moslem League Party in the Punjab Assembly should declare his allegiance solely to the Moslem League Party in the Assembly and not to the Unionist Party or any other Party.
- (ii) That the present label of the coalition should be dropped, namely the Unionist Party; and
- (iii) That the name of the proposed coalition should be the Moslem League Coalition Party.

To understand the meaning of those demands we should turn back 21 years in Punjab political history. In December 1923 the late Mian Sir Fazul-i-Hussein founded the Punjab Unionist Party with certain clearly defined intentions. The Punjab was indeed lucky to have so astute and far-sighted a leader to direct its future, and his name is to-day revered throughout the Province regardless of intervening readjustments of loyalty. Sir Fazul saw the glaring inequalities of urban and rural areas and the disabilities of the agriculturists as compared with the townsmen and traders. Further, he realized that these disabilities, while mainly affecting the Moslem community, also cut across all communities; and it was to meet this situation and improve the lot of the under-dog irrespective of his creed that he conceived the Unionist Party.

After a long term of office in the Government of India, Sir Fazul-i-Hussein returned to the Punjab, and in response to the wishes of many friends he again undertook the rejuvenation of his party in preparation for the coming elections. Those friends included all the leading Punjab Moslems, and his re-entry into politics was demanded and welcomed by such men as Sir Shahab-ud-Din, the veteran speaker of the Assembly, the late Sir Sikander Hayat, Sir Firoz Khan Noon, the late Mian Ahmed Yar Khan Daulatana and the late Nawab of Mamdot. It is a sad reflection that representatives of three of those families in a new generation are busy attempting to destroy the work of the man who led their fathers.

Previous to the elections in 1936 Sir Fazul-i-Hussein was approached by Mr. Jinnah with a view to enlisting his support for Moslem candidates to stand on the Moslem League ticket. Sir Fazul refused to recognize candidates on a purely communal basis and consequently only two

League candidates entered the new provincial Assembly, one of whom subsequently joined the Unionist Party. In the intervening years nothing whatsoever has happened in the Punjab concerning Moslems to demand any modification of this situation, and Moslem provincial interests are as safe to-day as they were eight years ago. It should be noted that at this time the majority of Moslem Unionist members of the Assembly were Unionists only with no other commitments. It was generally recognized that with regard to the All-India situation Mr. Jinnah's hand, as that of the accredited leader of Moslem India, required strengthening; and with the object of achieving this a pact was concluded in October 1937 between Mr. Jinnah and Sir Sikander Hayat who had succeeded Sir Fazul-i-Hussein as Premier. This provided that all Moslem Punjab Assembly members who were not already members of the League should now join the League and accept its programme. It further provided—and this is the significant point—that the continuance of the Unionist Party would not be questioned in either name or effect.

It should be noted that at this stage Pakistan had not yet figured as the League's main demand. The pact was fully accepted by the Council of the League and the situation was that, so far as the internal affairs of the Punjab were concerned, Moslem Assembly members were Unionists while, in matters of an All-India interest such as general questions of Moslem culture and education and economic welfare, Assembly members were also interested as members of the League. This was a perfectly rational situation under which dual loyalties could concurrently be respected. But it did involve Moslem members of the Legislative Assembly being members both of the Unionist Party and the League Assembly Party, a situation apt to confuse the public outside the Punjab.

In 1940 the League passed its "Pakistan" resolution, and it is here that the issue becomes blurred. The Sikander-Jinnah Pact continued as the recognized regulation of League and provincial Moslem relations. In view of the new commitment should not this relationship have been honestly reconsidered at the time?

Hitherto the accepted League policy had been based on Mr. Jinnah's "fifteen points," a statement of the League's case evolved in 1929 mainly concerning the issue of "joint" as opposed to "separate" electorates, the separation of Sind from Bombay and other matters of All-India policy. With the adoption of Pakistan as the League's goal we might logically have expected some new negotiation between the Punjab Moslems and the League. Nevertheless the Sikander-Jinnah Pact continued to be regarded by both sides as the official guide for that relationship, and on paper, if not in open council, the Pakistan conception was accepted by the Moslem Assembly members. As recently as the 26th April 1944 the Punjab Premier declared that "the All-India Moslem League resolution of 1940, popularly known as the Pakistan resolution, is the sheet-anchor of Moslems in the Punjab as elsewhere. I have my faith in it and I propose to stand by it."

The situation has since been clarified by the expulsion of the Punjab Premier from the League and he is therefore free to pursue his own policy in co-operation with his Hindu and Sikh colleagues. But until his expulsion, to a layman his position and that of the whole Moslem element of the Punjab Assembly was full of anomalies. One could but conclude that, since Pakistan had never been clearly defined, its interpretation by the Qaid-i-Azam<sup>1</sup> and the Punjab Moslem Unionists was each according to their respective inclinations. In the case of the Punjab the situation was fully accepted by the Premier's non-Moslem colleagues in the Ministry, which was perhaps all that mattered. The real issue of Pakistan was never in the foreground until Mr. Jinnah's visit in April 1944, and previous to this, in effect, there was a tacit understanding by which the Ministry functioned perfectly as a unit without further inquiry. It was perhaps a matter of letting sleeping dogs lie.

When, however, a proposal was made to change the Ministry's name from that of a Unionist coalition to a Moslem League coalition, the complete issue had honestly to be faced. In a lazy manner one might have commented, "What's in a name?" The answer was in this particular case "Everything." A change would have meant nothing less than a reversal of the precedence of responsibility. The Moslem Assembly members were elected by the Punjab Moslems as Unionists, and until a new election their first responsibility is to their electorate with a secondary responsibility only to the League. Therefore, to alter the title of the party would have been to assume a role for which they had no mandate from their electorate and to acknowledge the right of the President of the Moslem League to dictate the domestic policy of a provincial party; hardly an equitable interpretation of democratic representation.

This reversal of responsibility was in fact the declared intention of the All-India Moslem League as later became clear by its own naïve admission. In the letter<sup>2</sup> from their Committee of Action to the Premier, Nawabzada Liaquat Ali Khan, the convener of the Committee wrote as follows:—

"It is made clear that you do not acknowledge the authority and power of the All-India Moslem League to control and direct the activities of its provincial branches and their legislative parties and its members. . . . It is a legitimate assumption to draw from your statement that you do not owe allegiance solely to the Moslem League. Your first allegiance is to the Unionist Party and your allegiance to the League, if at all, is only a secondary one."

It seems odd that an intelligent body of men should challenge the simple principle that the Premier of a Province of democratic con-

<sup>1</sup> The title by which the Moslem League President is generally known among Moslems—literally "Mighty Ruler."

<sup>2</sup> This letter asked the Premier to explain his position, threatening disciplinary action if his explanation was not satisfactory.

stitution should have some conscience in the matter of his responsibility to his Ministers and his electorate; yet this is what the League objection amounted to.

The reactions of the Punjab minorities to these negotiations were defined in a joint statement of the three minority Ministers, Sir Chhotu Ram, Sir Manohar Lal and Sardar Baldev Singh, released to the Press on the 1st May 1944. There were cogent reasons, they said, for regarding any Ministry with a communal label as wrong morally, constitutionally and politically. They might be prepared to join a League Coalition Ministry if the League would undertake to abandon the idea of Pakistan for the duration of the war and declare its unequivocal support to the war effort. In view of the extremely vague stage of definition attaching to the whole Pakistan project, a position on which the minorities had repeatedly sought clarification, they could obviously not elaborate their views further. Speaking of the issue on the 30th April 1944 Sardar Baldev Singh made the following very fair comment:—

“I would say here that in earnest of our desire to live peacefully with our Moslem brethren, I, with the concurrence of my friends in the Community, made every effort to come to terms with Mr. Jinnah. I repeatedly and pointedly asked him for a clarification of the Pakistan scheme. There was no response. I must have made it clear that it is not offices, posts or even exclusive communal advantages that we seek. The right of self-determination is now an admitted principle recognized all the world over. The Sikhs hold that this right of self-determination can and should be exercised to the fullest extent without violating India's integrity and unity by Moslems. Mr. Jinnah has so far shown no inclination to accept this clear principle; nor does he explain what his own scheme is. We have at one time been assigned the status of a sub-nationality and at another been offered lavish promises of generous privileges. The time has come to end this purposeless manoeuvring.”

The minorities would welcome any data as to the precise political and constitutional implications of Pakistan and its geographical boundaries. In the absence of this information they could hardly be expected to co-operate in a Government mainly committed to an undefined programme affecting the whole future of their Province.

The negotiations leading to the subsequent expulsion of the Premier from the League were not without interest; and the real significance of the situation—which was that the Punjab Premier was being summoned to Delhi like a naughty schoolboy—could hardly be concealed.

The Premier rightly demanded first to know the attitude of the League to the Sikander-Jinnah Pact. With reference to this demand, one passage in the resolution of the Committee of Action should be noted. It states:—

"The Committee have however taken note of Malik Sahib's statement that he joined the League in pursuance of and subject to the terms of *what he calls* the Sikander-Jinnah Pact. The Committee will give their decision on this point along with others when they are in full possession of all the defence which Malik Sahib may care to offer."

The technique should here be noted. If you want to repudiate an agreement, you start off by inserting the words "what he calls." Subsequently the pact, in League parlance, usually became the "so-called" pact and this was considered sufficient to appease political plasticity. Later the Committee of Action sought to explain away the accommodation of their conscience in a complete statement claiming that the alleged pact had never been anything more than an assurance by Sir Sikander Hayat of a certain line of action in the Punjab. Whatever it may or may not have been, the fact remains that for nearly seven years it was referred to as a "pact" by both the parties concerned and no attempt was made by the League to alter or modify this understanding.<sup>1</sup>

While the expulsion of the Premier has resulted in a division of Punjab Moslems, by which Unionists have suffered reduction, at the same time we owe it to the League that an ambiguous situation has been sorted out and provincial issues are to-day clearer than for several years. The Unionist Ministry still holds a working majority against all combined opposition. The young Punjab Moslem Leaguers have yet to produce a programme which will appeal to the peasantry. In contrast, the Unionists have a long period of progressive agrarian legislation to their credit and their popularity in the Punjab is on sure foundations.

Simultaneous with these critical events came the expulsion of a Moslem Minister from the Ministry. This added a side interest of sensational rather than fundamental value. It, of course, kept Lahore social and political circles in a buzz of expectant gossip. It is here only recorded, since it led to two new appointments in the Ministry. It had been realized for some time that Sardar Shaukat Hayat, the soldier son of the late Sir Sikander Hayat,<sup>2</sup> was out of sympathy with the general policy of his colleagues in the Ministry. While the Punjab, more than any other area, is still the repository of big families and their traditions, it was perhaps too much to expect that a young man with so little experience of public service should be able to weather the

<sup>1</sup> The statements and counter-statements of this controversy would fill a complete volume. From many possible extracts I select one particular passage from a letter of the Committee of Action which indicates the laborious intricacies into which the argument deteriorated. Early in the proceedings they stated that the Unionist Party had "ceased to exist when its Moslem members joined the League." Later they accused the Premier of a dominating loyalty to the Unionist Party at the expense of the League. The Premier was quick to point out that, if he was in fact now accused of loyalty to the Unionist Party, it was hardly logical previously to have argued that that party did not exist!

<sup>2</sup> Sir Sikander Hayat's career was that of a soldier, a statesman and a diplomat. For a short time he acted as Governor of the Punjab. He saw active service on the Frontier and had a varied experience in politics. The family home is at Wah in the Campbellpur District. His son, Shaukat, saw service with Skinner's Horse in the present war and was for a time a prisoner of war with the Italians.

pitfalls of sudden heavy responsibility. Had the experiment proved successful it would have passed as a happy record in a corner of the history of the Province. While the actual case for dismissal was unconnected with the concurrent political crisis, in the public mind it was impossible to dissociate the two; and Sardar Shaukat Hayat was in some quarters regarded as the victim of political expediency. It might have taken the edge off the severity of dismissal, had he been given the opportunity to resign.<sup>1</sup> Abrupt action did, however, immediately clear the air and was probably the more honest conclusion to a relationship full of irritation for both the parties concerned.

The exit of a Minister at this particular stage gave the Premier an opportunity to strengthen and consolidate his Ministry which was now expanded to admit two Moslem Unionists. Major Ashaq Hussein, an uncle of Sardar Shaukat Hayat, now joined the team, thereby retaining the family connection with provincial politics. The other recruit was Nawab Sir Jamal Khan Legari, an appointment that caused some surprise, since he had hitherto been regarded as a supporter of Mr. Jinnah. He however received a clear mandate from his constituency<sup>2</sup> and the Ministry now seems set for a period of comparative stability and free to take up the immense undertakings in connection with its post-war reconstruction programme.

Following on all these events a spontaneous flood of oratory burst over the Punjab country-side. The League opened with a meeting of the Moslem Students Federation at Rawal Pindi in June 1944, to which Mr. Jinnah sent an impassioned message:—

“Recent events and developments in the Punjab and the decisions taken by the Moslem League have, I am happy to say, liberated the Mussulmans of the Punjab from the clutches of our enemies. You have before you now a clear-cut policy and programme to organize the Mussulmans throughout the Punjab and carry the message of the Moslem League into every village and hamlet of the Province. The Punjab is the corner-stone of Pakistan and it is up to the Mussulmans of the Punjab to rise to the occasion and organize themselves in every department of life—social, economic, educational and political. The future of not only the Punjab but the whole of Moslem India is now in the hands of the Punjab Mussulmans who are the custodians of the honour, prestige and reputation of Islam.

“I therefore appeal to you to regenerate your entire energy and fortify your determination to organize our people and work with all your heart and soul for the achievement of Pakistan as early as possible, for therein lies the salvation of the Mussulmans. In Pakistan lies our defence and our deliverance.”

<sup>1</sup> Once again the published correspondence developed into a matter of statement and denial between S. Shaukat Hayat and the Premier, which left the public rather bewildered, the one claiming to have submitted his resignation, the other claiming never to have received it.

<sup>2</sup> He represents a dozen or so “*tumandars*” of the southern Punjab. These are landowners enjoying special rights, forming a special constituency in the Punjab Assembly. Sir Jamal is a sportsman whose horses run with success on the Lahore racecourse.

I have quoted this passage in full, since to me it seems to sum up all that is communal and intensely dangerous in the League programme. We used to hear this kind of talk from Hitler. In effect it says: "In the Punjab you Moslems are surrounded by enemies waiting to destroy your culture, your religion and your economic progress. You must defend yourselves if you wish to avoid annihilation." The standard of life, agrarian legislation, social reform, municipal improvement, agricultural research and a hundred other nation-building policies count for nothing. All that matters is that India consists of Moslems and their enemies.

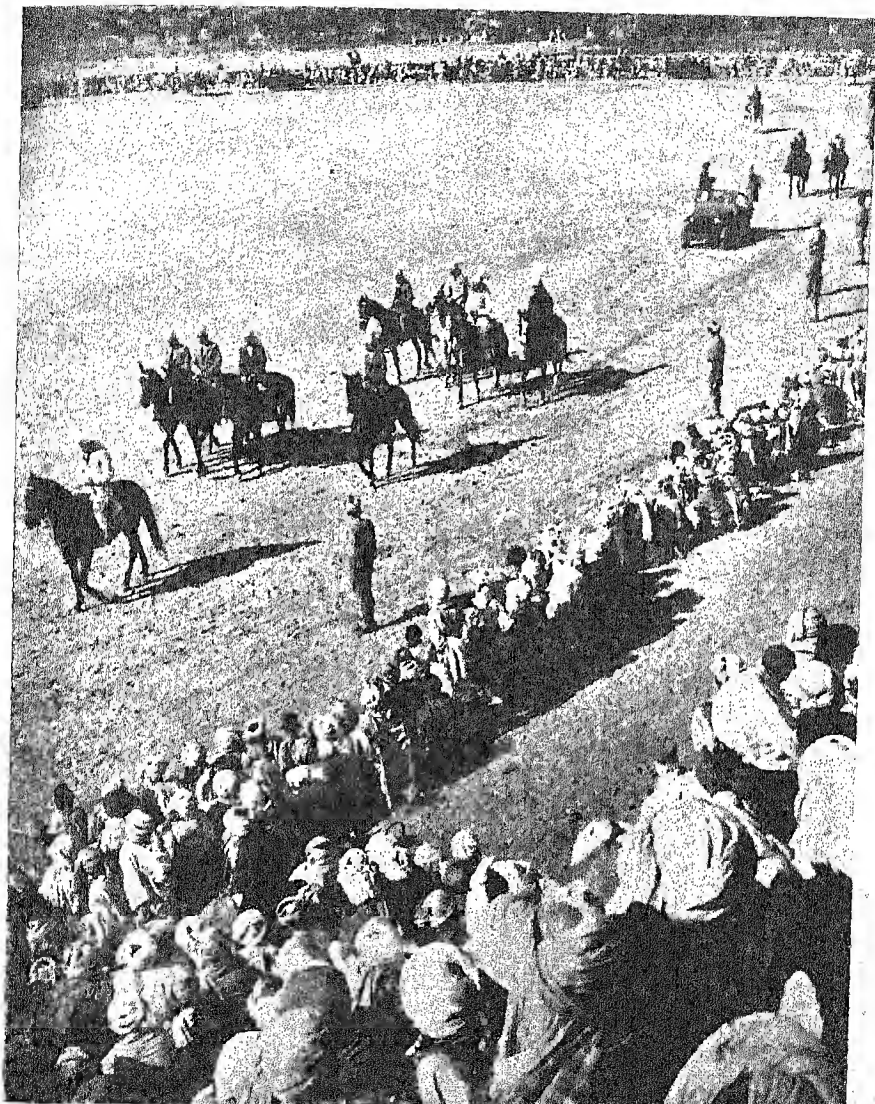
And here it is appropriate to reveal what seems to be the whole fallacy of the League case. It could truthfully be said that the Pakistan issue was adopted by the League in retaliation for their experience in the years of Congress Provincial Governments. It was generally regarded as the sheet-anchor of a frustrated community after a few years of rigorous suppression in those areas where Hindus predominated. Yet, in effect, it is to be applied in the one area where it could definitely be said that there was no possible challenge whatsoever to Moslem supremacy. Could the Pakistan programme include a plan for population transfer on a large scale, there might be logic, in that it would then operate for the protection of very large minorities of both communities. But to tell the rugged Moslem peasantry of the Rawal Pindi District—or for that matter of any Punjab District north of the River Ravi—that they must up and organize themselves for their defence, their destiny, their deliverance and a dozen other such catch-words for the crowd, just does not make sense.

The crux of the whole problem would seem that if, as a result of the next provincial elections, the League Party came to power with the declared intention of marching forward to Pakistan, then pressure both from within and without the Province will be too great for the voice of moderation. If however a Unionist Ministry is again returned with the intention of resisting Pakistan, this would indicate the death and burial of the project and it is doubtful if it would ever be resurrected.

There is yet a third possibility to which reference has been made, which is that by mutual consultation and agreement the Ministries of the three Provinces concerned might decide to amalgamate on the perfectly normal grounds of economic expediency. The solidarity of a Pakistan area would then be achieved by reason of common needs, a more enduring unity than that of communal prejudice and far less painful in achievement. The issue would be an All-India one. Yet if the local demand was unanimous it is difficult to see how it could be refused.

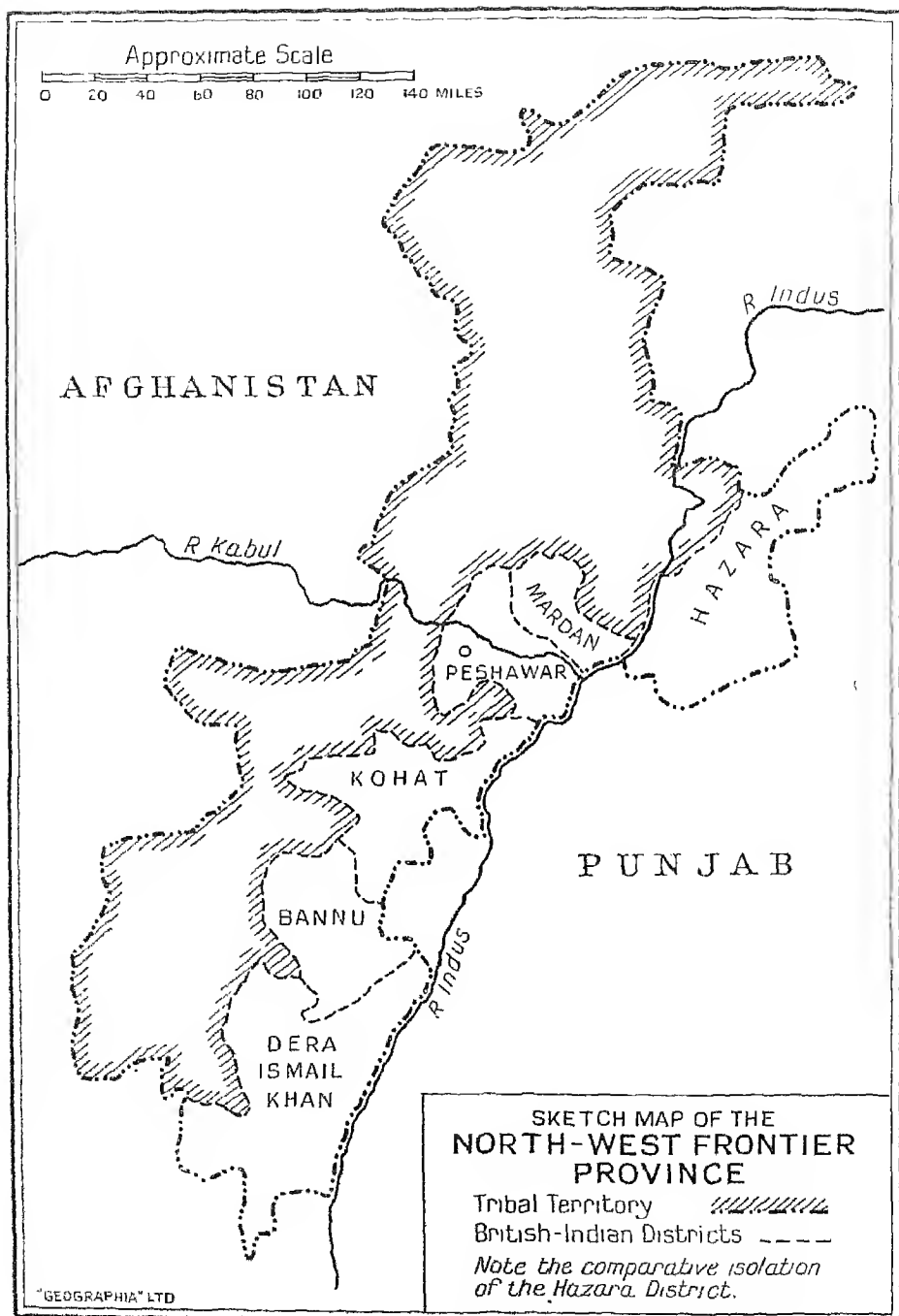
In a situation full of doubts and difficulties, one principle is clear. Pakistan cannot be forced on the Punjab from outside. It can only be achieved on the expressed desire of the people of the Punjab and other areas concerned.

As late as December 1944 the line-up of the parties had resolved into a probable ministerial party of 100 with an opposition of 74 of whom



A Punjab welcome to the Commander-in-Chief. Talagang, March 1945.





33 were Congressmen and 23 were Moslem Leaguers. In addition four Moslems were sitting as Independents, including Begum Shah Nawaz. Nawab Iftikar Hussein of Mamdot had assumed command of the provincial League Party as its elected leader and Sardar Shaukat Hayat was his deputy, the party being pledged to work under the direct control of the Central and Provincial Parliamentary Boards.

Until, therefore, fresh elections are held it seems fairly certain that the Unionists can hold the field. It is my personal opinion that the elections will not dislodge them provided they make full use of their opportunities. With a very large surplus budget and an ambitious reconstruction programme, they are in a strong position. In these issues, the returned soldier will play his part and there will be desperate efforts to canvass his vote. Here, again, the present Government have a record of an energetic policy of assistance to the soldier in the form of innumerable concessions and sympathetic legislation. This Land of the Five Rivers has its loyalties and its counter-loyalties. Yet overriding these considerations is an atmosphere of friendship to Britain which does not obtain to the same extent elsewhere. It is difficult to resist friendship in India where and when it is found; nor is it right or wise to do so. I feel that, whatever the future status of this north-west area of India may be, conditions are such that the ties with Britain must remain unbroken for many years to come.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE NORTH-WEST FRONTIER

I SUPPOSE IN ONE WAY OR ANOTHER THE LAND ACROSS THE INDUS MUST have claimed about sixteen years of my time in the East; and very grateful I ought to be; for it certainly brought me good friends and some golden moments. I never cultivated that fanatical enthusiasm for the Pathan which grips many Englishmen, though I like him well enough for his free, cheerful attitude to life and his sturdy physical grace.

From Peshawar, as you look out over the Pathan's home-land on a winter evening round that rich, green valley of the Kabul river, the air is charged with a rare stimulation. In the distance to the north the sun is catching the snow peaks of Kashmir and away to the west it plays on the edge of the Safed Koh, a rare backcloth to the carpet of sugar-cane patches and orchards and water channels murmuring between the lucerne fields. Six or seven miles across this country behind the Peshawar Vale hounds would satisfy any patron of Leicestershire, and the snipe and duck down by the river were good fun in the days when there was time to waste and cartridges were at a reasonable price.

My introduction to the Peshawar Valley was through the Frontier Constabulary with which I once did a short attachment. That was in the days of the great Handyside,<sup>1</sup> a leader whose name will be

<sup>1</sup> E. C. Handyside, C.I.E., Late Commandant Frontier Constabulary.

remembered with reverence all along the border for many years to come. Apart from being a very brave man Handyside was the most engaging eccentric I have ever met. His house in Peshawar was open to all, and over the week-ends people came and went and one never sorted out who were staying or what their names were. Outside in the compound was a complete menagerie. There were a couple of old ponies called the "pensioners." I think they must both have been well over 20, and they were allowed to trot round the dining-room table after the port for scraps of bread. I remember a monkey and a cat and a dignified, ancient spaniel which ruled the house. But we drew the line when it came to Mary the bear! She broke loose from her tree and was last seen causing alarm and dismay round the gunner Mess. Luckily for Handyside, he had a most excellent head clerk, for his own office was quite chaotic and he seldom paid a bill. A harassed landlord would appear once a month on the veranda and leave wondering which was the aggrieved party.

Poor Handyside fell to a shot from a mediocre second-class outlaw in a village not far from Peshawar. I forget the year. It must have been about 1926. A monument on the top of the Kohat Pass overlooking the little Bosti Khel valley of the Adam Khel Afridis stands in his memory. For the Afridis he was a fearless foe. To us he was also a friend of boundless generosity and good humour.

The conditions of the Frontier are not very simple if you have never been there, and for the uninitiated I must recall a few dull facts. There is a rich, green valley surrounded by forbidding, stony hills, and for generations the men who live in the hills have regarded it as their privilege to visit the land flowing with milk and honey below and carry off what they could. Reproduce that situation all down the border to South Waziristan and you have, in general terms, the Frontier Problem.

Previously the Province was part of the Punjab, administered by the Punjab Government. But Lord Curzon, realizing that it constituted a whole-time study, separated it in 1901 when it was placed under a Chief Commissioner. This officer had a dual responsibility. He was responsible to the Viceroy for political relations with the tribal areas, while in the six settled Districts of the British Indian portion he exercised the normal functions of a Commissioner responsible to the Government of India.

The area of the Province, therefore, divides into two. From the river Indus to the tribal border is British India, while on to the Durand line which constitutes the Afghan boundary is the tribal area over which is exercised diplomacy rather than control.

The Government of India Act, 1935, brought no change in these fundamental conditions. What it did bring were all the blessings of Provincial autonomy and full ministerial Government to the settled Districts. But the Governor continued to administer the tribal area which has hitherto been no concern of the Government in Peshawar. It will be appreciated that the tribal area, from which not one rupee of revenue is collected, constitutes a formidable liability on Central Revenues.

Furthermore, the British Indian portion of the Province is also not a self-contained economic proposition and takes a subvention from Central Revenues of a crore of rupees a year with which to carry on. This will be readily understood if it is realized that here we have six Districts, an area the size of a normal Commissioner's Division in the Punjab, supporting full ministerial Government with a Legislature and all its paraphernalia; a situation which Lord Curzon could certainly not have foreseen. Talking to both officials and unofficials in the Province I had the impression that they would welcome a re-amalgamation with the Punjab. One of the six Districts, the Hazara District, has far more in common with the Punjab than with the Frontier Province, for it lies on the Punjab side of the Indus with Rawal Pindi more accessible than Peshawar and Punjabi more frequently heard than Pushtu, the language of the Pathan. How a re-amalgamation would suit the Punjab is another matter. On paper the Punjab would have to carry the crore of rupees which at present the Government of India shoulder. But ultimately expansion seldom handicaps a State and there is an enormous fruit export trade waiting for development in the Frontier Province. In return the Punjab would find a ready internal market for its surplus wheat across the Indus.

The standard of education in the Province is quite lamentable, and whenever expert advice or instruction is required they have to borrow from the Punjab. Nor were the Moslem League Ministry, which held office when I left in October 1944, likely to make much headway and I think many would have welcomed a return of Dr. Khan Sahib, the Premier in the Congress Ministry which had held office previous to the Governor's assumption of control in 1939. As an example of communal considerations impeding progress, it would be difficult to surpass the story told me by Rai Bahadur Ishar Das, a prominent Hindu citizen of Abbottabad. He offered the Ministry three lacs of rupees for a non-communal high school at Abbottabad, a public-spirited gesture which there could have been no valid reason whatsoever for refusing. Nevertheless the offer was refused. Comment is superfluous.

Much has been written of the Pathan mentality and the persistence of the primeval doctrine of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. Across the border it dominates domestic life, but since the tribes have close affinities on our side it is also a problem in the Districts. I had a friend who was Assistant Commissioner of the Charsadda tehsil about 15 miles from Peshawar. One day in his Court a man was shot dead by his enemy. The next day a much respected pensioned officer of an Indian Cavalry Regiment drew my friend aside and, in the manner of an ancient sage handing advice to an inexperienced beginner, told him that he would be wise not to proceed in the prosecution of the murderer! That is the kind of social standard on the Frontier. Add to this the fact that women are regarded more or less as cattle, and you can see the problems of a man like the Government Director of Public Instruction,<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Khan Bahadur Shah Alam Khan. A most honest and conscientious official. It should be understood that the Government machine in the Provinces functions permanently alongside Ministries which may come and go. In the North-West Frontier Province officials are members of the Political Service.

But when we have finished criticizing the Pathan and his total unconsciousness of the way of the rest of the world, we have to admit he is a man, and if you win him round you could wish for no more loyal friend. His primitive cunning may be illimitable. But he will let you know if he is your enemy and will not stab you in the back. "Set a thief to catch a thief," is a precept we have worked to with some success, and often the Pathan himself is the right man to deal with his own folk, particularly in the trans-border area.

There is in Peshawar an Intelligence Bureau which combines the needs both of the Army for purposes of framing punitive action and of the Administration. Both military and police officers are represented on its staff. In one of the many political disturbances, I think it was the Red Shirt<sup>1</sup> agitation which lingered on into 1932, the Bureau had to devise means by which the trans-border Mohmand tribes should not be over-influenced by the Red Shirts on the British-Indian side of the Mohmand border. Plans were accordingly detailed to drop leaflets over the affected area. The imagination of the British officers of the Bureau had run dry and they turned to a certain well-known Pathan who has held appointments up and down the Frontier and who was at the time attached to the Bureau. Without hesitation he produced a fairy tale which no British officer could have dared to perpetrate. This was his story:—

The sleep of many holy Pirs who had long since lain in stilled and dignified peace in God was being most vulgarly disturbed. In exactly what manner it was difficult to say, but their messages from the past were coming through with persistence to the Mullahs, and these indicated that the offenders were dressed in red. Red, it so happened, was a colour abhorrent to the holy ones. It was obviously the duty of the faithful to have nothing to do with men in red for this would only stir them to yet greater irreverence.

The argument was obscure; but was, nevertheless, quite sufficient for the purpose. The leaflets were signed by a host of Mullahs of whom nobody had ever heard or ever will hear! Set a thief to catch a thief.

The Moslem League Coalition Ministry in the Frontier Province was precarious in October 1944. It had enjoyed a comparatively free hand, since the opposition was mostly in jail. But one by one, the Congress members were being released and opinion was that on the first issue in the provincial Assembly the League party would be defeated. A Congress Ministry might not be unwelcome if Dr. Khan Sahib<sup>2</sup> cared again to lead it. But there were rumours that he intended to go into political retirement.

<sup>1</sup> Khudai Khidmatgars (Servants of God), known as "Red Shirts." They constitute the rather militant Congress Moslem element in the N.W.F.P.

<sup>2</sup> Brother of Abdul Ghaflar Khan. Since these events a Congress Government has returned to power in the Province. The explanation of this apparent anomaly is that since Moslem supremacy lies unchallenged in the N.W.F.P., and in the absence of alternative progressive party politics, the appeal of Indian nationalism absorbs the energies of the younger Moslems. In a Press interview on the 25th April 1945 Dr. Khan Sahib displayed an extremely realistic approach to the problems of the day with little trace of the old Congress intractability.

That which the public know as "The Frontier Problem" amounts to the manner in which the trans-border tribes are handled and their consequent behaviour in relation to British India. There are, and always have been, two ways of thinking. There is the school of the "Forward Policy," and the school of the "Closed-Border Policy." I do not intend to go deeply into the issues because the subject in itself is sufficient for a volume and a little knowledge is a dangerous thing. But I think it well to indicate in a few sentences the straightforward nature of the problem, for there is nothing obscure about it such as can cloud an All-India constitutional question.

The Forward policy in its complete form merely states that, if you want permanent peace, go forward to the Durand line, disarm the tribes as you go and then stay and administer them. The Closed-Border policy says with an air of self-righteousness that we shouldn't interfere overmuch with the lives of the tribesmen and that so long as the tribes do not make trouble over our side we won't make trouble for them. What the exponents of the policy really mean is that the Forward policy costs too much and that therefore the only alternative is to keep a careful eye along the border and be ready to punish swiftly when the tribes become obstreperous.

Between these two extremes policy has swayed for the last 50 years, now one way, now the other. We have worked to a compromise by withdrawing regular troops and establishing locally enlisted Militias, but the troops have frequently had to return. Since 1900 there have been no less than nine disturbances which might claim the caption of "Military Operations" in greater or less degree.

It is, of course, a fact that had we at any time in the present century taken iconoclastic action and had also been prepared to keep large forces indefinitely in the tribal areas we could have disarmed the whole border and settled the matter. It is of little use to apply disarmament in patches, for so long as there is an unlocked entrance the arms will always come back. But to drive the Forward policy to its logical conclusion would certainly tie up a lot of troops indefinitely and in pre-war days would have cost more than any Government of India would have been prepared to pay. In the meanwhile, we may be fairly certain that conditions have not fundamentally altered. Since 1938 there has been comparative peace on the border, due as much to the personality of the Governor as to anything else. Sir George Cunningham knows the tribes intimately and understands them. We have therefore, with the exception of difficulties with the persistent Faqir of Ipi, come through the past years successfully; a period which might well have been of serious embarrassment with German opportunism at work, had we not had forceful and wise leadership at hand. But this is not to say that we have solved the problem, for we have not. We may be fairly certain too that a bold Forward policy, such as might cost many crores over a number of years, will not have support. It seems a pity that if we are to plan

for India in terms of Rs. 1,000 crores over five years,<sup>1</sup> we cannot include insurance for Frontier peace in the programme.

Nevertheless there is, as I see it, a practical middle way which came to me during my last few months in Resettlement work on the Frontier. Apart from about 80,000 men now in the Army, the Province employs about 30,000 men in keeping the peace in the form of enlistment in the Frontier Corps,<sup>2</sup> the Frontier Constabulary, additional police, etc. With the conclusion of the war, there will be a vast amount of modern equipment accumulated in India and at the same time there may be 50,000 men from the Frontier awaiting demobilization from the regular Army.

There is, therefore, the opportunity to create a highly efficient locally enlisted force on the lines of the old Punjab Frontier Force,<sup>3</sup> not only to perform the duties of the present Frontier Corps, but also to take on the complete role of the Army in the aspect of their presence in connection with the wider interpretation of Defence. The present 12th and 13th Frontier Force Regiments might well be taken as the nucleus on which to build, and we could then re-form the Punjab Frontier Force as a new North-West Frontier Force on a basis of high specialization, a process everywhere becoming essential in such things as science, agriculture, industry and medicine.

Our reconstituted Frontier Force would have the great advantage of tradition from which to start. Furthermore, with the creation of a specialized force, two further requirements would be satisfied. First, a large number of regular troops would be released for a more legitimate offensive role, while, secondly, a large number of Pathans released from the Army would receive immediate re-employment in the new force. Satan finds mischief for idle hands and this is particularly applicable to the Frontier.

In the past the maintenance of regular troops in tribal areas has not got us much further. In effect, the kind of process which has operated is as follows. For one reason or another we have had to send in a column to punish a certain tribal section. The matter may only have begun with a cattle theft or an abduction from British India. But the infection spreads quickly. There is retaliation and then a few shots are fired and, before we know where we are, there are all the makings of a major campaign. The column goes in and builds a road behind it to maintain its garrison. The garrison then has to stay to maintain the road!

Troops put down in the middle of the Wazirs or Mahsuds have always seemed to me analogous to the Nazi occupation of European countries. That the initial expedition was necessary at the time we may not deny. It is the subsequent situation which is so unsatisfactory. There is, after all, no reason why a Madras sapper or a Mahratta sepoy should have anything in common with a Wazir, and a Pathan is certainly nearer to

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter XII.

<sup>2</sup> The Frontier Corps consists of Militias maintained in South Waziristan, the Tochi and Kurram valleys and Chitral. They perform the same duties over the border which the Constabulary undertake within the border. Both are political forces not under military control. The former is officered by seconded Army officers.

<sup>3</sup> See Chapter IX.

an Albanian than he is to a Bengali technician! I remember up in Wana at the back of Waziristan, where I had a squadron one winter, the nearest contact we ever made with the local inhabitants was in our twice-weekly gallop outside the wire with the Wana drag-hounds. For the sake of appearance we then took along a couple of mounted Khassadars who, I suppose, would have acted in diplomatic negotiation had we ever had reason to exchange any greeting or abuse with the local shepherds roaming the Wana plain.

But this kind of situation takes on a very different shape if you replace troops from down country with a large and highly trained force which has a stake in the country. Moreover, through such a force there is the golden opportunity to influence the tribes through the medium of education in a manner which would hold out the prospect of their eventual full partnership in the wider life of British India. Incidentally, the location of released regular troops on their home territory facilitates a number of administrative problems in connection with recruitment and mobilization.

It is on the educational scope of such a scheme that we could build our hopes. The personnel of the Corps would be made to bring their families along and house them in quarters where they would receive some idea of a better standard of life. Primary schools would take their children during the day while a welfare educational staff could apply themselves to the women. But this is not all. Schools could be established all over the country. With some system of educational rewards to take the place of the present system of tribal allowances, school attendance would be assured, though schools might have to be located near Frontier Force posts. Medical dispensaries could be attached to schools, for a doctor is an ambassador all over the world.

All of this would be quite revolutionary for the Khans and Mullahs of primitive conservatism. Even the notion of a soldier keeping his family in the unit lines would be new to many. But with determination to see the plan through I am certain it could be carried to a successful conclusion.

In applying such a programme diplomacy would need to be backed by force; or rather the power to use it if necessary. The kind of Frontier Force which I have in mind would require an exceptional type of officer, for he would not only have to be an efficient professional soldier but would need to have intimate knowledge of the Frontier, its language and mode of life, backed by something of the spirit of the missionary.

Educational authority would need at first to be vested in the officer commanding the Frontier Force who would exercise it through a special Educational Corps. Later, as it became possible to apply ordered Government, this might conveniently be exercised through specially selected officers of the Force.

All this would cost a lot of money. The ability to apply force at a moment's notice at any time would need some more roads and highly trained troops. But it certainly would be no more expensive than an unplanned, unimaginative military control up to the Durand line



and it does hold out the prospect one day of a return for one's money. Financial liability would fall on the Central Government. The whole conception, however, raises one issue which needs careful thought. The picture I have drawn would seem to connote almost the usurpation of the functions of the Governor in his tribal responsibilities and their assumption by a soldier Commandant of the Frontier Force responsible to the Government at Delhi, with a few political advisers to assist him. That is what we know as "a quick one"; and I leave it for better men than myself to think about. I feel that it would be wrong in principle to discard a long-term plan of progressive and educational value to a fine but backward community, merely because of a failure to find a suitable readjustment of key appointments at the top.

A further condition of importance is that enlistment into the Frontier Force should be from both sides of the border, for it is in the intermingling of men from administered and unadministered India that the latter are likely to be induced to a reasonable amenability to eventual ordered control.

This forbidding land of queer attraction has of recent years dropped out of the limelight and, instead, a Frontier whose defence can hardly have worried us much in the past now holds the stage. In fact, at one stage in the war, it must have been difficult to know which way to point our guns on the Khojak Pass ! But I have a feeling that the North-West will come into its own again and that in years to come they will be pulling out the old plans and reshaping them to new needs.

But perhaps already my imagination has turned to indiscreet conjecture. Let the future, therefore, look after itself. We live in the present.

## CHAPTER XII

### RECONSTRUCTION

IF THE SPATE OF PAMPHLETS AND PRESS COMMENT ON POST-WAR RECONSTRUCTION which was flooding the country when I left could be a measure of ultimate successful realization, we could be certain that the Continent is in for an unsurpassed Utopian era. Daily we were told of one scheme or another, ranging from the Bombay plan of Rs. 10,000 crores to cover the whole of India, to Sir Colin Garbett's ideas on co-operative village settlements for soldiers.

From a short experience as a Resettlement Liaison Officer, I saw the beginnings of our machinery to deal with the demobilized soldier; and to some readers it will be of interest if I outline the plans we thought might emerge for his benefit, before coming to the more tremendous issues of the future planning and reconstruction of India. In the latter sphere, I have no technical experience of business or economics and I can but speak with average common sense from the wealth of data which was continually coming up to the Resettlement Directorate at G.H.Q.

The return of nearly 2,000,000 soldiers to civil life is no light matter; and the problem was early in the minds of the Indian Government. The Madras Presidency, the United Provinces, the Punjab and the North-West Frontier Province were particularly interested, but there was no corner of India which had not contributed to the Army and in the technical branches Bombay and Bengal had both supplied their quota.

The new Directorate of Resettlement came into existence as an office of the Adjutant-General's Branch early in 1944. Perhaps even more so than in England it was imperative to start thinking early of the ex-soldier's welfare. If the soldier could be settled back on to the land or into a profession and given at least a safe start, the influences working for post-war stability would in one important respect be considerably strengthened.

By all means let the soldier be subject to rival demands on his support in the political arena when back in his home. This is natural and right. But let there first be a period when he is left in peace, free to find his feet as a citizen and turn the digested lessons of Army life to account both for his own material advancement and for that of the community. This, I conceived, was the work of Resettlement Officers.

In broad outline the actual machinery of our plan differentiated between technical and non-technical personnel. Technical men were to be placed into civil employment by the Labour Department of the Government working through Labour Exchanges in the main cities, while we ourselves, through existing army Agencies such as the Civil Liaison, the District Soldiers' Boards and the Recruiting Offices, would tackle the non-technical personnel mainly represented by the agriculturist. Nine Resettlement Officers were sent out into the Provinces to get in touch with Provincial Governments. Our work lay in keeping Governments in touch with demobilization plans, in encouraging Government schemes for the employment of ex-soldiers, particularly in finding land, and in persuading Governments to assist Army Training Centres in their very substantial vocational training schemes with the loan of agricultural teachers, equipment and funds.<sup>1</sup>

Training centres became hives of activity with chicken runs and rabbit farms and vegetable gardens springing up in all directions. Barrack rooms were turned into veritable museums with models and pictures of cows and manure pits and specimen seeds and diagrams showing all the results of agricultural virtue and neglect.

So eager did some Centres become on this unexpected aspect of soldiering that G.H.Q. had sometimes to issue friendly reminders to Commanding Officers that their first responsibility must for a long time remain the training of men for war. The Army was in fact undertaking a very impressive task in building up potential citizens of example and service to the State. Provincial Governments realized this and the Punjab and United Provinces Governments in particular were quick

<sup>1</sup> Since this chapter was written, the machinery has been greatly elaborated. Plans are in hand to set up over 70 Employment Exchanges by 1946 and no less than six Directorates are being established under a Director-General of Re-settlement and Re-employment.

to co-operate. The latter was still a "Section 93" Province and, while regretting the circumstances which necessitated the continued control by the Governor, from the point of view of getting things done it was refreshing to deal with men with sympathetic ideas about the soldier and his welfare. My own beat was the Frontier Province, Sind and Baluchistan, an enormous area; yet not so formidable as it might seem on the map since Baluchistan is mostly a waste of stones.

The Training Centres in a Province did not necessarily hold men only from that Province. If the United Provinces put up money for the training of soldiers as citizens they would incidentally be training men from possibly the Punjab or the Frontier Province. It was then up to us to persuade the other Provinces concerned to reciprocate, so that all Provinces should act in conformity.

While the Army was busy in this way, it was not very encouraging to watch the hopeless apathy in the country-side to any suggestion of similar preparations. One felt that we were training men to adopt a better and higher method of life only for their efforts to be swallowed up in the general indifference they would encounter once away from the stimulation of disciplined instruction. My own area was an uneven responsibility, for the Frontier Province had about 100,000 men in the forces, while the enormous areas of Sind and Baluchistan accounted for only about 20,000, more than half of whom were Punjab immigrants.

In the summer of 1944 the Frontier Ministry were still ardent disciples of the Moslem League. Having sorted out the Government Secretaries and their Departments I thought it time to set about interesting the Ministers in my work and in the future of the discharged soldier generally. I accordingly wrote to the Chief Minister, Sardar Aurangzeb Khan, setting out briefly my business and asking for an interview. I received no reply. At the time a League deputation, fresh from their excitements in the Punjab, had come on to the Frontier Province and were busy holding meetings in the country round Peshawar. A few days after my effort to see Aurangzeb I found myself next to him at an enormous dinner in honour of the League visitors. I tried to interest him in the future welfare of the Pathan soldier community; but it was clear that, with League officials on all sides, he was so preoccupied in keeping to his best League behaviour that he had little attention for intricate details of schemes for the settlement of soldiers.

About this time the Premier of the Punjab was appealing for support for his Ministry to enable him to have "the opportunity of carrying out, through their elected representatives, post-war schemes about which the Punjab owed a solemn obligation to the Punjab soldiers." I envied my opposite number, the Resettlement Officer in the Punjab!

In the North-West Frontier Province Government reconstruction and resettlement were at first placed under the Government Secretary for Development who was responsible to the Chief Minister. Later it became the task of a specially appointed Secretary and doubtless proposals have by now hardened into decisions. In the summer of 1944, however, matters were moving very slowly. We were in a vicious circle

whereby the Central and Provincial Governments were both waiting for each other's plans. This was particularly evident in the North-West Frontier Province, which, being a deficit Province, normally depends on the Centre for financial assistance. The Province would therefore want to know how much money it could get, while the Centre would want to know the nature of the schemes it was being asked to support.

This hesitation appeared on the lower levels also. In the North-West Frontier Province I was a member of the non-official Committee set up under the Development Secretary to advise on policy and make proposals. Some influential landowners and two business men, a Sikh and a Hindu, sat on the Committee. The Hindu, Rai Bahadur Ishar Das, was almost the only representative of big business we could claim. Sugar factories were his particular interest but he had many irons in the fire and he with the Bagai family who held the Waziristan lorry contract were about our only capitalists. In committee he and his colleagues were eager to initiate all sorts of projects after the war. But if he was to put up the money for fertilizer plants or sugar factories or tanneries he wanted power. At what rate would the Government be ready to sell electric power? And would the extension of electric power be carried out at the places where he required it? The reply of the Director of Industries was that he would want to know a lot more about the amount of power required and the prospects of its permanent requisition. It seemed to me that without the acceptance of a mild risk at some point plans would never get beyond the opening discussion.

The Committee generally had the impression that the Province was eminently suitable for a large expansion of its electrical supply, based on a new hydro-electric scheme on the Kashmir Hazara border. The Peshawar Valley, they thought, could absorb as much electricity as could be produced and they were particularly enthusiastic over the extension and electrification of the North-Western Railway in the Province. To these ambitions the Government technical adviser gave no encouragement. While the verdict of the expert had to be accepted, I confess that in their obvious disappointment the Committee had my sympathy. So often the position is reversed and it is a matter of stimulating interest in proposals which savour of Western hustle and are therefore regarded with suspicion. Yet here were a couple of Indian business men and four or five Pathan zamindars clamouring for the development of their country and experiencing a brake on their efforts from the Administration.

My own interest was mainly in the extent to which such schemes were likely to employ soldiers or make for their general contentment. I sometimes wondered if all this thought and effort would prove to have been worth the trouble. We had grown into the habit of persuading ourselves that the soldier was thinking much of the future. In the case of the British soldier educational pamphlets and the Press assured us that he was determined to build a new Britain of National Insurance and free education and State medical services, a blend of all the ideologies which the Army educational department might dangle before him. I have little experience of the British soldier; but I have a feeling that the

great majority only want to get home, put their feet up, enjoy security in the form of a small business and take a girl to the pictures.

Some such outlook is shared by the Indian soldier. More than anything else he wants to get back to his village and sort out any number of family muddles which have been maturing in his absence. He wants to wander round the village and gossip and repair his house. Beyond this I do not believe he has any clear intention. Certainly ideas of social reform are beyond his ken.

From this I do not for a moment suggest that we should in any way relax our efforts to guide him; for if one attempts nothing, assuredly nothing will be achieved. My impression is only that we were probably overestimating the ability of the soldier to use his brain at any continued degree of concentration after demobilization. What we hope for the soldier is not just a peace which represents a "cease-fire" with a subsequent scramble for advancement; but a mental peace which possibly the lethargy of an Indian village under improved conditions may harbour just as much as the world of competition. I would therefore define our object not so much as to fill the soldier's mind with confusing ideology, but tactfully to give him a little domestic science and a little practical agriculture, sufficient to bring some degree of order and cleanliness into homes of muddle and often of squalor.

To raise the standard of living is a slogan worn threadbare; and there are those who postulate on philosophical grounds that to live more comfortably is not necessarily to live more happily. A short time ago I read an essay of John Betjeman who argued conclusively that we all over-washed! There is reality to the philosophical approach in Western domestic life; but in the East dirt and mean living sap both mental and physical growth and it is truly said that you cannot raise heroes from hovels. The reason why the Indian soldier, in spite of conditions in his home, is usually a fairly tough human specimen is that the clear air and fields are never more than a couple of hundred yards away. As for attempts at moral education who were we to preach sermons? A realization of values comes not in a schoolroom curriculum but through example and normal human contacts.

In Resettlement work I found myself much handicapped by the lack of any technical acquaintance with Indian agriculture. The kind of problem requiring a solid background of knowledge was in the settlement of the soldier on to Government land.

Sir Colin Garbett produced an attractive report with plans showing symmetrical villages grouped round a geometrically patterned town, the latter being the co-operative centre for the marketing of produce, for research and collective administration. If the soldier's private life could be completely controlled in a system of thorough regimentation, such schemes might bear fruit. But the more responsible men of higher rank, officers and non-commissioned officers, have their own independent ideas and are not going to submit to orders governing the details of their domestic life. They want to build their own homes in their own

way. Discipline was good enough while still in service. But in retirement they like their freedom.

In the search for land for the ex-soldier we were uncertain whether men would be prepared to settle at any distance from their homes. For example, a problem of this nature may arise in the case of the areas of Sind, the North-West Frontier Province and the Punjab. The Sind Government have two enormous irrigation projects in view, the Upper and Lower Sind barrage schemes. Between them these will bring 1,000,000 acres under cultivation. It would be an asset for Sind if a disciplined community of ex-soldiers could be settled on the new land. But Sind having few soldiers of its own would have to offer land to Punjabis and Pathans. Such land might be in the form of awards for distinguished war service. The Sind Government would rightly impose their own colonization terms which would include insistence on full occupation by the owner and his family. Absentee landlordism would not be permitted. Would a Punjabi be prepared to become to all intents and purposes a Sindhi? One doubted it. The Sind Ministry were naturally inclined to be hesitant. It would, I suggest, pay them well to take the long view and throw open the facilities of their Province to chosen immigrants and aim at turning them into good citizens of Sind. This I think was the view of the Governor, the Chief Minister and the Sind Government Secretaries. The land available would have to be purchased by the Government of India from Sind as part of an All-India policy, for naturally the Province requires a normal return on the tremendous capital outlay of many crores involved.

It was rather alarming but very interesting, after many years of soldiering, to have to grasp details of crop rotation, irrigation and similar matters. The Directorate of Army Education were, largely through the energetic pen of Colonel F. L. Brayne,<sup>1</sup> pouring out pamphlets on marketing, seeds, implements, thrift and a hundred other subjects; yet I had the awkward suspicion that the returning sepoy had one great pull over us. The soil was his, as was also the practical experience. It was his life and not ours. His ways were those of his father and his father's father. If we could by practical demonstration show him a better way, then he might heed our counsel. Confront him with a patch of good wheat and bad wheat alongside each other and he would understand it. But this needed the expert and few Army officers were experts. It was here that the civil Administration could help. To India instruction through the eye will always be effective and I believe if in each Commissioner's Division the Administration could take over one small colony and dictate every aspect of its life, developing it for public exhibition, the sleepy country-side could be set thinking.

I suppose as astonishing an achievement as any in the last five years has been to teach close on a million peasants, to whom the petrol engine was previously a piece of magic, the substance of mechanical locomotion. I well remember the insecurity of life round the roads of a station in the

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter XVI, Footnote 1.

North when the sturdy Rathor Rajputs of the Jodhpur Lancers were trying out their skill on old Ford civilian lorries! Many think that this extensive mechanization will lead the discharged soldier away from the fields to ambitions of more variety. They anticipate small village garages springing up everywhere. Certainly, if two or three enterprising soldiers can get together and run tehsil services on co-operative lines, they should be highly successful, and the provincial road schemes are anticipating this. But I can see no formidable metamorphosis of any scale calculated to alter the fundamental character of the rural areas.

The element of uncertainty persists in the Far East to a greater degree than in Europe and it is difficult to say where Indian troops will be when hostilities cease. There may be scattered formations in China, Burma, Malaya or beyond. The work of resettling those men will require the very closest collaboration between the Resettlement and Demobilization Directorates, and up to November 1944 we had not made much headway in this respect. In one way our task may be lightened. In Europe there will be a nostalgia for a quick reversion to civil life, to shake the moth balls out of an old suit and tidy up the garden. If the only indication of the sepoy's sentiments of which I know is correct, this sentiment may not be nearly so strong as in the West. I recall that a certain Training Centre, acting on instructions from above, was asked to sound its personnel on their wishes and intentions after the war. Of 5,000 men so questioned about 60 per cent said they would like to remain in the Army!

Of the many measures for the soldier community being undertaken the most tangible is the Military Reconstruction Fund under which two rupees for every soldier is put aside every month to a Fund which will be at the disposal of Provincial Governments for the use of the soldier community as a whole. The Fund may well be close on 20 crores by the time it closes. The soldiers themselves have little idea how they would like the money spent and it will need a lot of wisdom to use the Fund to the best advantage. My own preference is for the encouragement of any scheme with an educational bias.

In all this there is just one danger. Along with our education for better living we must teach self-help. We have a permanent obligation to men who have been disabled. But in regard to the vast majority of men our object can only be to see them launched with a fair start, after which they must stand or fall on their own merit and by their own effort. This is in keeping with the accepted principle that a soldier is but a citizen subject to the normal hazards of life with the rest of the community; and it is to be hoped that every effort is being made to tell him so.

And now we turn to that wider vision of the planning for India in the post-war world with its prospect of better times for many millions, millions who to-day exist rather than live. It is a boundless quest bewildering in magnitude, and we can do little more than expose a few of the major issues which make the outline of the picture take some tangible shape.

In March 1943 the ball was set rolling by the establishment of the Reconstruction Committee of the Viceroy's Council with the Viceroy as President and Sir J. P. Srivastava as Deputy President. A General Policy Committee with six assisting Policy Committees<sup>1</sup> were formed to advise the main Reconstruction Committee, a spate of further sub-committees following in their wake. The six assisting Policy Committees were each presided over by the member of the Executive Council concerned and were composed of official representatives from the Provinces and non-officials representing trade and industry. I was indebted to Sir Firoz Khan Noon for a vacancy on one of these Committees, that of "Resettlement and Re-employment," which affected the demobilized soldier. The Committees were, I think, regarded chiefly as the means by which Government kept in touch with public opinion through the non-official membership. Certainly in our Committee the diversity of membership gave me opportunities to listen to subjects ranging from the indignities suffered by Harijans to a defence of the Bombay plan "straight from the horse's mouth."<sup>2</sup>

By 1944 Reconstruction was so much on the map that it was decided to appoint an extra member of the Executive Council to take charge and co-ordinate the enthusiastic but rather muddled application of thought everywhere being devoted to the subject. Accordingly Sir Ardeshir Dalal was appointed as member with the new portfolio of "Planning and Development." Sir Ardeshir had had both administrative and business experience. As a civil servant he had been Deputy Secretary of the Revenue Department of the Bombay Government and had also acted as Finance Secretary. In business he had been a Director of the great Tata organization. This was all to the good and he took charge on the 1st August.<sup>3</sup>

Two particular conditions attach to planning for India which do not ease the task of those at the helm. The first is the intricate relationship of Provinces and the Centre and the second is the fact that the present Government of India cannot claim to be the popular voice of political organizations in the country. To a Resettlement Officer the first set of circumstances was continually in evidence. Both the Centre and the Provinces seemed to be waiting on each other for the opening move. By November 1944 the Bombay Government and the United Provinces had produced plans and the Government of India had settled down to a policy of co-ordination. Once the Provincial and State pictures were

<sup>1</sup> (i) Re-settlement and Re-employment. (ii) Disposals, Contracts. (iii) Public Works and Communications. (iv) Trade and Industry. (v) Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries. (vi) Social Services, Education, Health, Labour, Welfare.

<sup>2</sup> Sir Pershotamdas Thakurdas, who served on the Committee, was a signatory of the Bombay Plan.

<sup>3</sup> Previous to the setting up of the new machinery the way had been paved by the established Industries and Civil Supplies Department, who had proposed a Supreme Council of National Economy with the concurrence of all the Legislatures and States concerned. They recommended such a Council to have jurisdiction over the whole of India with control of major industries such as coal, iron and steel, textiles, aircraft, shipbuilding, etc. Its executive body would be an Industrial Affairs Authority analogous to the Federal Railway Authority. The State would finance certain industries either entirely or in part. It might even own key industries on which the progress of other industries depended.



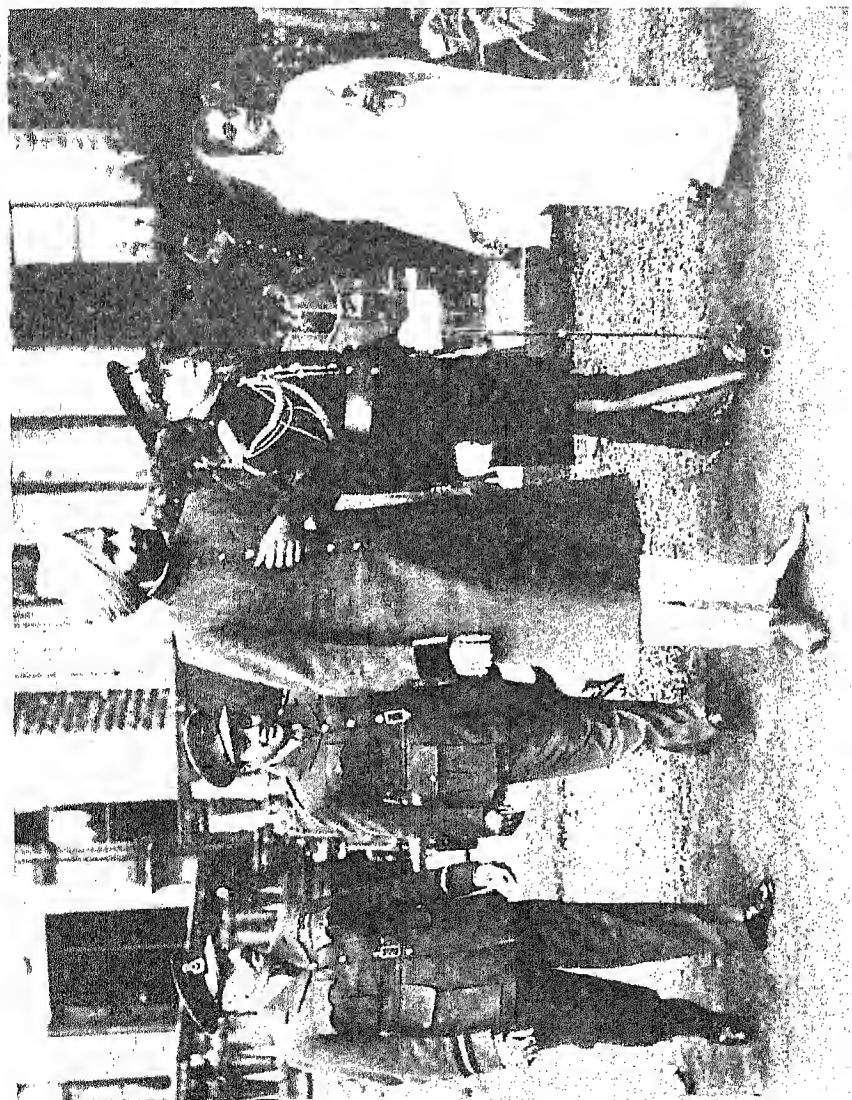
clear the central Department would be able to dovetail activities into a common pattern.

It was early apparent that the existing constitution was by no means conducive to smooth progressive planning; and those difficulties which had beset the authorities in the war-time exercise of food control were now equally obvious in the task of framing schemes of an All-India nature for better post-war conditions. Under the present Constitution Provinces enjoy autonomy in respect of certain nation-building activities such as industry, agriculture and education, and it was evident that if plans of real scope and application were to evolve, then certain essential powers must be concentrated at the Centre at some risk of interference with provincial initiative. In a draft statement of policy in August 1944 by the Planning Department this position was faced and in regard to Industry it was recommended that the central authority should be given powers essential for All-India industrial planning. It hardly seemed clear to the public whether recommendations had hardened to realities. To voice a purely personal opinion, in the reports and memoranda issuing from the Planning Department and from corresponding provincial bureaux we lacked the precise decision and order which appeals to minds used to the military method.

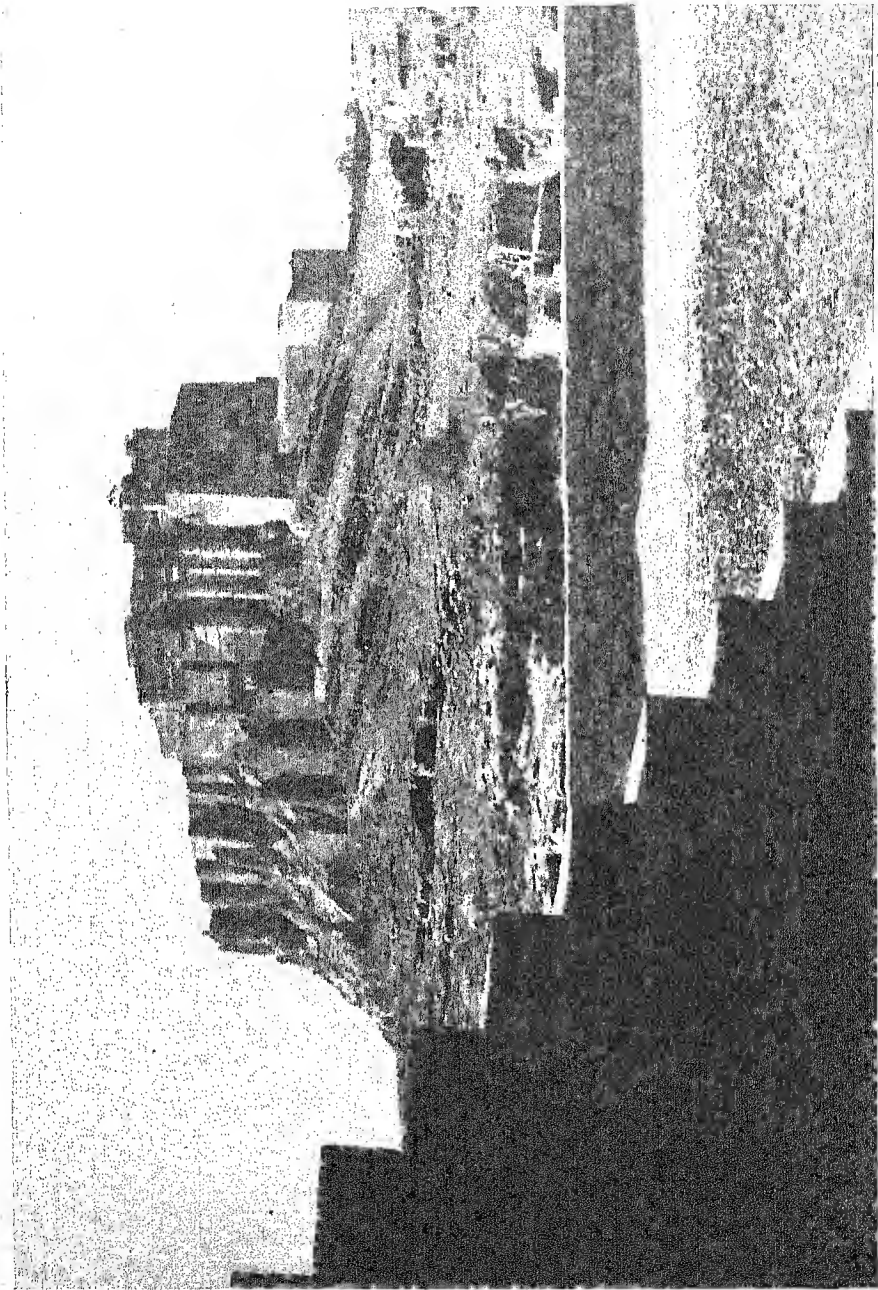
In April 1945 the Government of India issued a further statement. It was a statement of policy rather than a plan and judging it from a distance it seemed only to restate their case with perhaps greater confidence. Again it was stressed that under the Act of 1935 Industry was a provincial subject. Since Government's proposals contemplated a high degree of central control, the Central Legislature would be required to enact that certain industries whose development was expedient in the public interest should come under central control. Until such legislation Industry must remain a provincial subject. We may presume that the necessary steps are being taken. Government were careful to point out that, when they had the necessary constitutional authority, such an arrangement would have no long-range constitutional application and the extent of its survival beyond the present Constitution would be a matter to be decided by the future. It is a disturbing element in future planning that constitutional change is hardly compatible with continuity. Yet there should be time to see an effective policy launched and it is difficult to see how any future Government could wish to repudiate a sound industrial policy once under way. The new Government statement therefore amounts only to setting out their intentions when they receive the necessary power.

These could be summarized as:—

- (a) Control over twenty basic industries.
- (b) A long-term tariff policy.
- (c) The nationalization of industries essential to the national interests where private capital was not forthcoming.
- (d) Control over electric power where regional rather than provincial interests are concerned.



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Their Highnesses the Maharajas of Gwalior, Jodhpur and Patiala and Begum Shah Nawaz,  
Viceregal Lodge, Simla, 6th October, 1911.



[Photograph by the Hon. Mrs. Birdwood]

**SOLITARY MAGNIFICENCE.**

The fort at Jodhpur. Landmark for pilots of many air lines.

- (e) Support to industrial enterprise in a number of ways such as by loans or subscribing a share of the capital or the provision of capital equipment and representation on Boards of Management.
- (f) Licensing of industry. Strange as it may seem, the Government of India have never had power to license industrial undertakings, with the result that industry has tended to become highly concentrated in certain localities, for example the cotton textiles of Bombay and Ahmedabad and sugar in the United Provinces.
- (g) Agriculture being the poor man's livelihood, its development must be undertaken almost entirely by the State. The State must advance capital expenditure and will require to borrow large sums for financing irrigation, electric power, public health and other Social Services. It will need to be able to mobilize the country's savings and must therefore maintain control over capital issues.
- (h) The allotment of priorities of imports. For his assistance Sir Ardeshir Dalal set up a Consultative Committee which has been described as an "Economic Brains Trust."

The criticism which greeted this announcement of policy could well have been anticipated and it is a dreary feature of the present stage that one can always foresee exactly what the various elements are going to say. Mr. Desai, as representing the Congress view, read into it scope for British capital and skilled British personnel. Mr. Birla's organ, *The Eastern Economist*, attacked the proposed controls on lines familiar to us in the West. To an impartial observer the most alarming feature would not be concerned with the policy itself, the professions of which are admirable, but with doubts that there will ever be a Central Government, whether bureaucratic or popular, strong enough to see policy through to its conclusion.

In regard to the problem whether the present executive Government of India should go ahead with planning, irrespective of the fact that it had no direct mandate from the electorate, the air was cleared by a statement of the Reconstruction Committee. In publishing their report on post-war planning they stated:—

"Planning for India as a whole does not prejudice the constitutional issue, for whatever form the future Constitution may take and whatever measure of provincial and State autonomy under it, it is clear that all Provinces and States will benefit by the measures taken for the development of the country as a whole."

It was quite obvious that if all concerned were to sit down and adopt the attitude that a future National Government might not endorse the measures now contemplated, then nothing would happen at all. Moreover it was clear that a policy of action had the approval of the country.

The most tangible expression of the views of the thinking public was the 15-year economic plan published by some big Bombay business men.

Some of these were in close touch with nationalist leaders and they paid due tribute to the guidance they had received from the National Planning Committee appointed by the Congress under the chairmanship of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. But in doing so they made it clear that their plan was there for the guidance of the existing Government, should that Government feel inclined to make use of it.<sup>1</sup> More significant was the fact that Mr. G. D. Birla, a textile magnate of firm Congress affinities, was a signatory to the plan, as was also Sir Ardeshir Dalal himself, who was later to receive the new Government portfolio. The latter's very sane view was expressed in a Press interview previous to the assumption of his office:—

“The authors of the Bombay Plan hold that in order to carry it out fully and successfully a National Government is necessary, as the plan implies an amount of control and interference with the traditions and habits of the people which only a National Government, backed by the good-will and support of the people, can undertake. There is however a considerable amount of preliminary work to be undertaken, such as the training of the required personnel, the establishment of various educational and scientific institutions, etc. . . . All this is urgent work and cannot wait on political events. It has to be done by the existing Government and it is necessary to see that it is carried out on the right lines, so as to pave the way for the National Government if and when it comes into power.”

The main virtue of the Bombay plan was that it set men's minds working in the right direction and to a scale which had hitherto not been contemplated. As one member put it, it was not reconstruction of the old order so much as construction of a new one. It aimed at an expenditure of Rs. 10,000 crores in 15 years, calculated to treble the present *per capita* income, which with allowances for population increase would result in an eventual doubling of that income.

Before we examine this or any other plan we should take stock of certain principles which were early recognized by Government as indicating the foundations on which all planning should be based. The object, we were all agreed, was to raise the standard of living<sup>2</sup> by raising the purchasing power of the masses. Only an imaginative industrial programme could place the consumer goods on the market necessary to influence this standard. If the goods were there, with increased income the people would buy them. But to make the numberless contrivances from motor cars to sewing machines which we associate with a higher standard, machine tools are required and to operate machine tools technicians and motive power are needed. With such thoughts in mind,

<sup>1</sup> “The authors of the plan claim neither originality nor perfection. I am afraid they cannot subscribe to the view that all individual thinking on problems vitally affecting the welfare of 400 millions should be suspended pending the release of political leaders. . . . It can hardly be in the larger interests of the country for us to bury our heads in the sand.” Mr. A. D. Shroff, Bombay, February 1944.

<sup>2</sup> Some facts concerning the standard of living are given in Appendix I.

the principles emerged that all planning must first aim (a) at securing trained technical personnel and (b) at a complete survey of the mineral wealth and natural resources of the country.

The Bombay plan was early criticized for its alleged indifference to the welfare of the agriculturist. They were quick to deny this charge, for, as some of them pointed out, it is the agriculturist who will be the main consumer of goods. When we speak of raising the standard of living it is the agriculturist of whom we are mainly thinking. If he is to buy consumer goods his purchasing power must be increased, a condition which in turn depends on the maintenance of agricultural prices and the expansion of the agricultural market. All this I think was recognized by the authors of the Bombay plan and it came to be an accepted principle throughout the country that a balanced economy between agriculture and industry was the only happy solution to the problem of a general nation-wide improvement in living conditions.

If it be realized that the peasant is industry's potential market, and that the level of agricultural prices must be maintained, then some form of central control over those prices is indicated. Agriculture is a Provincial subject as we realized only too well at the time of the Bengal famine; so that it would seem we are working to a continuation, even an extension, of such central control of agriculture as now exists.

We may now examine the Bombay plan in further detail. It has many defects but it probably roused India from stupor with its bold hope for the future. The plan divides into three periods each of five years. It transforms what is at present an essentially agricultural economy into one in which industry will dominate. Thus, while the calculated national income from agriculture will be increased by 130 per cent, that from industry will be stepped up by 500 per cent. The total capital requirement, Rs. 10,000 crores, is allotted with Rs. 4,480 crores to industry, Rs. 1,240 crores to agriculture, Rs. 2,200 crores to housing, Rs. 940 crores to communications, Rs. 490 crores to education, Rs. 450 crores to health and Rs. 200 crores to miscellaneous purposes. The three five-year periods involve expenditure of Rs. 1,400, 2,900 and 5,700 crores respectively. Notable omissions are the figures for either general administration or defence. The figures are based on 1931-32 prices and the plan in terms of prevailing prices might well cost Rs. 25,000 crores.

But it is in the manner in which this vast sum of money is to be raised that the plan is open to trenchant attack. Take for instance the increase of 130 per cent over a period of 15 years fixed for agriculture. How will this be possible unless large-scale production takes the place of small-scale farming? And how can large-scale production be undertaken without a very large measure of State control? Within this plan I read no clear decision as to whether it is to be achieved under a capitalist or socialist system. In Russia where such plans were carried through with conspicuous success there was a revolutionary background. In the Bombay plan we see a revolutionary plan against a capitalist background.

Sums such as Rs. 10,000 crores, which we term the "financing" of the

scheme, held no fear for Soviet Russia since men and material under national direction usurped the mechanism of finance. Everything depends on the form of National Government which may emerge. But it seems that that form can hardly be a democracy as we understand it, if a plan such as this is to be seen through to fulfilment. To a layman even the present detached bureaucracy would have a greater chance of success than a popular but many voiced democracy!

It is clear that not only the authors of this plan but many others look to the realization of India's sterling balances of Rs. 1,000 crores or more as one means of financing the future. Speaking of this issue in June 1944 Mr. G. D. Birla said that the International Monetary Fund did not interest India, unless arrangements were made before any monetary scheme was adopted to repatriate India's sterling balances: "We do not want repatriation of our sterling balances in the English way. India has paid by sweating and starvation." I hardly think Mr. Birla or his interests have sweated or starved as a result of the war.<sup>1</sup> But that is not the issue. Here I only draw attention to that dangerous tendency among economists in India to regard the importation of capital goods against the sterling balances and their subsequent conversion into consumer goods and absorption by the masses as constituting the beginning and end of an economic Utopian era.

The great interest of the Bombay plan lies perhaps not so much in defects or merits but in the fact that it seems to connote the parting of the ways for India as between a choice of Gandhian non-materialism and industrialism. I do not see how the Congress capitalists can reconcile such a vast scheme with the highly decentralized organization of the spinning-wheel which attaches to Gandhian India. It is the kind of issue which before many years may well split the Congress on a problem far deeper than any which they have hitherto had to tackle. It is indeed a curious situation, this sudden demand for planned industrialization. It has puzzled people like the Indian communists who are by no means a negligible quantity; for they see their thunder stolen by the capitalists. It perplexes the Liberals who see in its execution a threat to the democratic method. It will certainly be unacceptable to the Moslem League since it is a Hindu plan. Yet it is undoubtedly the only kind of plan which can hope to place the country on a level of life comparable with standards elsewhere in the world.

The Government response<sup>2</sup> was to publish a Report of a plan also covering 15 years, in which they considered that Rs. 1,000 crores might be available for the first five years. They anticipate half of the total being raised from Central Revenue surpluses and half from loans. The

<sup>1</sup> Messrs. Birla Brothers have recently concluded an agreement with the Nuffield organization to assemble cheap cars in India. Mr. Birla was a member of the unofficial industrial mission to England in May 1945. (See Chapter III. Footnote 1, page 45.)

<sup>2</sup> Previously in February 1944 official reaction had been indicated by the Viceroy, Lord Wavell, in his address to the joint session of the Legislature: "We welcome constructive suggestions; and my Government is examining with interest the plan recently propounded by seven prominent business men. The views of the authors of this plan on the objects to be achieved are in principle the same as those of my Government."

Press reports of the plan indicated that again it represented no decision and was to be regarded as a statement of policy for guidance both of the Provinces and the States.

From all this data we can have a fairly clear picture of the manner in which planning will take effect. The plight of the peasant has stirred the imagination of all : "We must lift the poor man of India from poverty to security; from ill-health to vigour; from ignorance to understanding." These were the words of the Viceroy to the Legislature in February 1944. That is the fundamental objective. And to that end we see a certain chain of processes receiving recognition; the survey of all potential resources, the provision of cheap and abundant motive power,<sup>1</sup> the initial raising of funds by loans, taxation, the realization of foreign credit and private investment. We look to the accumulative effect of industrial expansion at one stage to create much of the money which will finance the next. Once the circle of prosperity is entered, the process may well take control and expand of its own volition. Wealth creates wealth. Furthermore we believe that this great achievement can only be the work of a truly National Government.

But in recognizing the economic and political implications of all this, there is to be remembered another aspect to planning divorced from either the material or the political. I refer to the scientific approach. In England there are many years of experience of the liaison of science and industry so that the results of research are readily available in industrial planning. In India we have the Board of Scientific and Industrial Research under its Director, Sir Shanti Swarupa Bhatnagar, who with some distinguished Indian scientists recently visited England. The visit was an unqualified success and the delegation made many useful contacts and were impressed with the desire of British scientists and industrialists to co-operate in the progressive industrialization of India. Thus an oft-repeated myth, that of Britain's antagonism to India's industrial progress, was exploded in a manner which could not have taken effect in the committee room or on the political platform. Men of science all over the world understand each other, and Professor Hill<sup>2</sup> was only expressing a truism when he wrote:—

"To suppose that any constitutional change alone—however desirable—can solve at once all India's problems, without bold and imaginative planning based on science and technology and without a lot of hard work, is just to believe in magic."

The problems of agriculture and health, to name but two, are problems for men of science; and the great Indian scientists themselves are the very first to demand that any planning must include a full reciprocal agreement of the exchange of knowledge between Britain and India. Moreover a few lacs spent in research pay a dividend in production

<sup>1</sup> Government proposals include the setting up of a Central Technical Power Board to scrutinize and co-ordinate all existing and potential power schemes in Provinces and States.

<sup>2</sup> Professor A. V. Hill, M.P., F.R.S.



out of all proportion to the cost. The brains of a scientist may be the wealth of a nation.<sup>1</sup>

Largely through the endeavour of Mr. Bhulabhai Desai, the Congress Leader in the Legislative Assembly, a motion was carried in 1944, demanding the appointment of an elected Committee of 15 members of the Assembly to study post-war plans. So long as it studies such plans the Committee can do work of real assistance. But let nothing occur to interfere with the good solid work of scientific research which must go on and which must be a matter of friendly collaboration between the scientists of Britain and India for a long time to come. You do not necessarily need a National Government to have discovered that 50,000 tons of ammonium sulphate applied to the paddy fields of Madras would increase the annual produce of rice by 125,000 tons. You need good scientists.

Perhaps the most sinister of the influences which are at work in India, to the bewilderment of planners, is the rapid increase in the population. Much as the involuntary muscles of the human body operate, so this vague intractable process is for ever at work. What exactly is happening? We will pick just one Province, that of Sind; and we will assume that what is happening in Sind is happening throughout the length and breadth of the land.

The population in Sind in 1941 was 4,840,000. This represents a 60 per cent increase since 1891. Sind is a surplus food producing Province and has been able to export large quantities of grain recently to the deficit areas. Even so, the increase in grain production is far slower than the increase in population<sup>2</sup> and there will come a time when Sind will cease to be able to export food grains. The urgency of the new Sind irrigation schemes is therefore apparent, but their use will be dissipated if at the same time there is no abatement of the present population increase. Over India as a whole the present annual increase is about 5,000,000. Here is a problem for courage and imagination. Nations in the past have legislated for the encouragement of population increases. But the reverse process is one which, so far as I am aware, has never yet been attempted. Nor can we see any real answer to it except in terms of education.

He would be a bold man who would attempt to put the needs of India into a scientific order of preference. In a message in June 1944 to the Policy Committee on Agriculture the Viceroy said:—

<sup>1</sup> As an example of the possibilities of well-directed research may be cited the Indian iron and steel industry. India has some of the finest and most abundant deposits of iron ore in the world, but her coals do not at present make the highest grade of coke required for the blast furnaces in which the ore is smelted. It has been estimated that an expenditure of £200,000 on research could within five years enable coke ovens to be designed and built which would produce first-grade metallurgical coke from Indian coal. This would not only enable an immense steel industry to be built up, but would provide as by-products large quantities of sulphate of ammonia required by agriculture and raw materials for the chemical and plastics industries. The benefit to the country would within a decade more than outweigh the costs of the research.

<sup>2</sup> Wheat production has increased 80 per cent. But fruit and vegetables are unaffected, while jowar and bajri production (millets) has decreased. Cotton production has increased out of all proportion.

"Agriculture must take a high place—perhaps the highest place of all—in our plans for the development of India after the war. Unless we succeed in raising substantially the standard of living in our villages, not only for the small farmer but for all who make their living on the land, India cannot become a wealthier, or a healthier, or a better educated country. . . ."

I have before me a short report written by Mr. Roger Thomas,<sup>1</sup> at present acting as Agricultural Adviser to the Sind Government, on planning for agriculture. Reading it, one is more than ever impressed with the imperative need of initiating urgent measures free from the encumbrance of political controversy. Whether it be crop planning or seed or manure or afforestation or irrigation problems, such as seepage, there are a host of subjects awaiting attention. To tackle them trained technical personnel are needed and needed urgently. The afforestation problem alone is formidable enough. As an example of the scope of planning, the post-war Forest policy plans to use 200,000 square miles of cultivable waste to produce village forests for firewood which will in turn release 70 million tons of cow dung fuel for manure; sufficient for 40,000 square miles of cultivation or 13 per cent of the present cultivated acreage of India.

But if the efforts of a trained staff, whether they be in the tehsils and Districts or in the Secretariats, are to bear fruit, then their seed must not fall on stony ground; which brings me back to what I personally would place as the focus of all planning; education.

Turn to any of the disabilities of the land and, from whatever angle they be viewed, the solution is found in terms of education. In my opinion by far the most important Indian official document which has been published for many years is the Sargent Report<sup>2</sup> on the "Post-war educational development of India." This report advocates a system of free compulsory basic education (6—14) by which the whole of India will be made literate within a period of about 40 years. At present about 85 per cent of the population are illiterate. The scheme, when in full operation, will cost Rs. 277 crores annually. Compare this with the Rs. 490 crores allowed for education over a period of 15 years under the Bombay plan. But the effect of education is not to be measured in terms of a commodity for sale. Just as economic expansion takes effect in an accumulative manner, money creating itself as it gathers pace, so does education tend ever to increase and expand once the pace is set. The principle of the conservation of thought and mind is as real as the scientific conservation of matter.

It is not any fundamental sense of cruelty which actuates the tonga driver to flog his pony to its last tottering moment of utility. It is ignorance. It is ignorance too which prevents a mother from entering

<sup>1</sup> R. Thomas, C.I.E., J.P. See also Chapter XIII.

<sup>2</sup> J. Sargent, C.I.E., Educational Adviser to the Government of India. Report of January 1944. It is unfortunate that this report does not appear to have received enthusiastic support from the Moslems, who see in it too many ideas borrowed from Mr. Gandhi's "Wardha scheme" of education.

a hospital to have her baby. Of that other ignorance, the ignorance of religious superstition, I speak guardedly, for I know Indian men and women of culture and education who willingly tie themselves up with all the fatuities of prophecy, the moon, stars, signs of the zodiac and the mumbo-jumbo of the supernatural.

The authors of the report have been careful to insist that the training of intellect and character must proceed side by side. Their intention is also that the provisions contemplated will cater for all, irrespective of caste or community. The Report, which voices the recommendations of the Central Advisory Board of Education, has been accepted by the official representatives from the Provinces, and since education is a provincial subject it will presumably be for the Provinces to put it into effect. Much of the financial implications would be borne by the Centre in the form of some kind of subsidy to the Provinces. One cannot believe that future provincial Ministries would repudiate such a plan once it was initiated. Education is surely the one aspect of planning in which we all might recognize the principle that you can do a lot of good if you do not mind who gets the credit. Hitherto it has represented an aspect of the British administration of which it might truthfully be said we had displayed little imagination. It has been our great sin of omission. Not the least of our difficulties has been the impossibility of finding women teachers. But those days are passing and the present Report assumes that its scheme will apply equally to men and women. It is a great conception, for if, with the material prosperity which economic planning may bring, there comes also to the vast army of illiteracy a better understanding of citizenship and its obligations, then assuredly the stage is set for the emergence of a nation.

## CHAPTER XIII

### CONCLUSION

FROM THE WEALTH OF OPINION WHICH ASSAILS BRITAIN IT IS CLEAR THAT, whatever the solution for India, at least a great many of those who look to the fulfilment of their aspirations cannot possibly be satisfied. We may suppose that there is a vast cauldron and that, according to the manner in which the sibyl stirs and adds ingredients, so there will be a greater or less amount of the sustaining elixir to go round. But however skilfully the sustenance is mixed, there are too many hungry mouths to feed. Should two be satisfied that one must go hungry? Or should three be content with a third each of the ration? It is easy to keep in mind a slogan of the greatest good of the greatest number; but it is less simple to know what is the greatest good and how it is to be distributed.

One path of action we trust will be avoided, which is to compromise for the sake only of compromise. It is true enough that, if children in a nursery fight over a cake, then the nurse will divide the cake equally.

But if the nurse is to be dismissed it is little use her dividing the cake if she knows that the children will fight over their portions once she takes her leave. In plain terms, this means that if we are convinced that a certain course is the right one, then we must be ready to enforce it, even though it might seem to favour one element at the expense of another.

It is always satisfactory to whittle down the demands of opposing elements until they meet on some common ground; and that, in general terms, is how we must still search for the solution. But if in despair it becomes patently obvious that the process is leading nowhere, then the time comes when the referee must throw in his weight on one side or the other. If that should eventually prove our unpleasant duty, it should not be shirked.

We have heard opinions from responsible quarters that an International Commission should settle the fate of India. Mr. V. S. Sastri, whose balanced opinion will everywhere command respect, has taken the view that it is perfectly in keeping with progressive ideas of international co-operation for the Indian problem to be regarded as an international responsibility. Mr. C. Rajagopalacharia<sup>1</sup> has also hinted that this might be acceptable. A Committee of Russian, American and Chinese representatives have been suggested as the jurists. Sometimes those Englishmen who perhaps know too much of India, and find the weight and maze of criticism at moments exasperatingly oppressive, must wish for the fulfilment of this proposal! For it is difficult to see how any Committee in the world could come to conclusions very different from those which we ourselves think should take shape, and it would be pleasant to place the onus of unpopular decisions on international shoulders in place of our own. But one obvious difficulty is that an international decision would still have to be enforced by the British Government. There can hardly be some undiscovered talisman waiting round the corner for international jurists, which would charm diverse Indian opinion to immediate acceptance in a sudden spirit of brotherly good-will. If therefore their verdict is not to be so very different from our own, how much more satisfactory that we ourselves should see the job through to the end. Odium and abuse will come our way and must be accepted. But once the great issues are settled embodying such agreement among Indians as can be achieved, there will be a very large body of public opinion which will rally to the side of decision as preferable to doubt, even though individual sentiments may not be satisfied.

The views which are expressed on India's future divide roughly into two classifications. First we may consider only the preliminary moves limited to considerations of how to discuss. Secondly we may speculate on the subject matter of discussion. The first task is of comparative simplicity and limitation. Yet there is by no means agreement on the form of discussion except in so far as we are all agreed that it

<sup>1</sup> Nagpur University address, 25th November 1944.

is mainly an Indian affair of Indians searching for agreement. The second task, in contrast, demands the profound study and individual attention of the serious student of India. In its essence it might be simply defined as a choice between union or partition. But the factors which dictate the decision are overwhelmingly complex.

Before plunging into the deep waters of final speculation, we should therefore keep this classification of the two types of discussion clearly before us; discussion of the preliminary moves and discussion of the final settlement. Under the former process would even be included the very important proposals announced by Mr. Amery and the Viceroy on the 15th June 1945; and I propose first to review a few aspects of the preliminary stages of Constitution-planning, the simpler and limited duty of finding out who is to make settlement rather than what that settlement is to be.

In October 1944 I had a long conversation with a gentleman for whose opinion I have profound respect. He is Mr. Yodh Raj, the General Manager of the Punjab National Bank. A member of the family which launched the Arya Samaj movement, he himself is little concerned with subjective religion. Apart from being obviously a very successful business man, he has a predilection for English poetry and a sense for politics, all the more impressive because it is entirely detached. It was his contention that no party which had not a sound economic policy could possibly survive. Thus, if British control in India were to-morrow to be withdrawn, not one of the existing so-called parties would last more than a few months because not one had an economic policy. Withdraw the target of their opposition and the Indian National Congress would collapse. The Moslem League and the Hindu Mahasabha would be in a similar predicament and the only parties with any ideas on a permanent national economy capable of recognition in the international sphere were the National Socialists and the Communists, both at present too weak to be effective in the political vacuum which would be created by a British withdrawal. It was patently clear, after the breakdown of the Gandhi-Jinnah talks, that the two main forces were, as ever, poles apart with no hope of either agreement or compromise. That being the case, had not the time arrived for the Government to by-pass both parties and come out with a bold policy of co-operation with those sane Liberal elements which were ready to negotiate? In the post-war world Britain being a debtor country must export intensely for survival, and he could not visualize any settlement with Britain which did not recognize the principle of the acceptance by India of a reciprocal tariff and trade policy with Britain.

As an alternative to a settlement above the heads of the present political leaders it was his opinion that we could give any party a trial run and that in the absence of a sound economy that party would collapse. Government in his view were far too timid in blowing their own trumpet. With the Congress, the League, the Mahasabha and the Sikhs all at sixes and sevens, a great opportunity existed for Government to create an effective public opinion, particularly in view of the explosion of the

myth of the infallibility of the two leaders. If the Liberals could control an All-India newspaper to reach the masses there was no reason why they should not capture the imagination of the public. Assuming that Government were prepared to invite their co-operation, there were men among them who would be far more acceptable to the public than the non-representative members of the Viceroy's Council, on whom he poured scorn. Here his complaint was of a more personal nature and he declared that Executive Councillors, when they toured the country, moved surrounded by a barrier of red tape and flattery and never came to grips with public opinion. Tea parties and dinners at which an Honourable Member delivered himself of some brief platitudes with a few comments for those on his immediate right and left were the means of elucidating opinion and there was little real contact and exchange of views. Tempered as these views were by some vague personal prejudice and allowing for the spirit of teatime chatter, they came from an Indian with no axe to grind who had contacts with many shades of political activity.

Many suggestions have been forthcoming, and every week the Press brought contributions from all sources of invention. Sir John Beaumont<sup>1</sup> recently suggested that a Committee of Indian jurists should produce the solution. I see no settlement from this proposal. The two representatives of the major communities who recently failed to agree were both lawyers, and perhaps the faculty only to see the legal argument is not even of advantage.

Yet another proposal is the attachment of large portions of India to the major States, a solution hardly likely to commend itself to the Congress or the communists! The reasoning would be that since the order of Princes at least represents a Unity covering the whole continent, by the absorption of British India into their territory the foundations for a united India cutting across communalism would be laid. By a simultaneous surrender of sovereignty by the States there would emerge at a later stage the framework of a great democracy; ingenious but too good to be true, while the administrative difficulties in giving it practical effect would create complete confusion. In the North of India presumably Bahawalpur State would treble its territory overnight!

Professor Coupland has drawn attention to the one cause for scepticism in the Cripps proposals. This is the unwieldy size of the proposed Constitution-making body which according to his calculations will number 207.<sup>2</sup> He elaborates his argument with example and clarity showing how successful nation-building in history has never been accomplished by large bodies of men, since the larger the numbers the less opportunity there is for the mutual exchange of private opinion and the personal impact of mind upon mind. Settlement becomes only a business of everyone expressing their own opinion and someone attempting to strike an average.

Convinced of this fundamental principle we should be clear that success is far more probable of achievement from the smaller than the

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter VII.

<sup>2</sup> It is of academic interest that the British representation will be one vote.

greater members and for my own satisfaction, over the morning shave—always a time for the best speculation—I evolved an Indian Commission to frame the future, as follows:—Two members of the Indian National Congress, two members of the Moslem League, and one member from each of the following communities: the Hindu Mahasabha, the Sikhs, the Scheduled Castes, the Social Democrats and the Indian Christians. The deliberations of this Committee would be directed by an English President. The name of Sir Stafford Cripps suggested itself; but there are others who might suitably be summoned to the task. There might conveniently be added an expert on Indian Constitutional matters who would be called on only in an advisory capacity for assistance with explanation of the present Act and the framing and shaping of future proposals. It would be beyond the means of the Commission to draft a new Act and their business would be to elaborate in detail a Report from which the necessary Act and concomitant treaties would be constructed. The total numbers involved, with a Secretary added, would be a dozen representatives. These would be the elected members of their communities by whatever process the latter cared to adopt.

For a moment we should examine this composition. First, it is to be noted that both the major communities have two representatives to one representative each from the others. Secondly, the Moslem League has the same representation as the Congress, thereby satisfying the League claim to initial recognition of a two-nation basis, yet without confirming final sanction of that principle. Full parity with the Congress in representation for all purposes has always been demanded by Mr. Jinnah. Thirdly, the members of the Commission are the elected representatives of the people and not the selected nominees of either the British or Indian Government. It may be thought that it is hardly fair to place on the shoulders of one man responsibility for decisions on behalf of his community. It is always helpful and might be necessary to have a second string for counsel and moral support. If this were recognized then the two major communities each would need three members, the other communities increasing representation to two. The feature of such a body would be its size, which is small enough for all members to know thoroughly each others' minds and for the President to assist them to a common understanding.

The Commission, having been elected, should then depart from all previous precedent and leave India. This drastic suggestion requires some explanation. The influences working on members if they remained in India would be overpowering and continuous. However much they might attempt to work in isolation and secrecy, there would be pressure on them from leaders, from their friends, from all those with an eye to the main chance and from the constant interference and public conjecture of the Press. In such circumstances how could balanced clear thinking ever govern their deliberations? This arrangement would of course preclude the taking of personal evidence. Is it necessary? The factors are by now the common property of all informed opinion, British or

Indian. If memories have to be jogged leaders of opinion, both official and non-official, could submit memoranda to the Commission before it sailed. As to its destination, England is hardly the right home to seek, and with a view again to avoiding outside interference it would be well to settle down in the calmer isolation of some country such as Switzerland.

Certain conditions would govern the whole conception. First, the members of the Commission would have to answer for the readiness of their communities either to abide by the final decisions of the Commission or, in the event of repudiation by their communities, their willingness to accept the verdict of the British Government. Secondly, all members would be required to furnish an undertaking to remain with the Commission until its conclusion. If an unsatisfied member was to break away in the middle of the proceedings, the effect could only be the collapse of further useful discussion. Thirdly, if the Commission were to reach final agreement and if their agreement was not endorsed by their parties on return to India, it would need to be understood that once again final settlement became a British responsibility. Such settlement might or might not then take the form of enforcing the decisions of the Commission.

If these preliminary conditions could be accepted by political leaders before a start was made, then there should be every chance of a real settlement. If not, then there can be only one alternative; which is that the British Government must work out their own solution in the form of an Act constructed without further Indian consultation, the Government retaining full control to see the Act started for what it was worth and thereafter leaving India to her fate. But such a proceeding can only be regarded as a last resort after all inter-Indian negotiation has broken down.

Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru's recent move for the standing Committee of the non-party Conference to elect fifteen or twenty members to present a Report was a step in the right direction; but it suffered under the initial disability, paradoxically, of too many elements of agreement in its composition. What is fundamentally required is that those leaders who represent the greatest divergence of views should be persuaded to meet, and there might then be a subsequent chance of agreement in a non-Indian environment under wise direction. A Committee which started with Mr. Gandhi's blessing without initial League co-operation could only drive Mr. Jinnah and his disciples into further isolation.

Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru's Committee received official approval and its merit was that further inquiry with assistance from Government could do no harm whereas it may have done some good. "If we fail to come to an agreement somebody else must discharge his duty in the matter. That somebody must be the British Government," said Sir Tej Bahadur. It is at least useful to have a clear mandate from an important section of Indian public opinion in the event of the necessity arising.

The Committee set about its business in a convincing manner and its opening questionnaire to those prepared to offer their views showed an



approach of reality and a real grasp of the issues. There was also a courageous sense of duty to see the job through under all conditions.<sup>1</sup>

It may be that in this perplexed search for an initial Indian agreement on the lines of bringing irreconcilable political and religious elements together, we have been wasting our time. We are perhaps like a student of chemistry trying to combine certain elements under treatment when all the time by the laws of chemistry it is impossible for them to do so. There is certainly an alternative approach to a solution of India by All-India parties. It is that, once provincial Ministries are functioning again in all the Provinces whether as Coalitions or in any other form, they should proceed to elect their own representatives to form the Committee entrusted with the task of framing the future Constitution. In such a manner All-India communal parties would be denied participation in the framing of proposals, except in so far as their representatives might be called upon to give evidence. This approach would be but an extension of the by-passing of All-India leaders already suggested, not by the British Government but by the representatives of the people themselves.

In *India and Democracy* Sir George Schuster outlined a scheme by which an Executive Council could be built up from a small Federal

<sup>1</sup> The recommendations of the Sapru Committee were drastic. The status of an independent Dominion would be declared immediately by Royal Proclamation. A Constitution-making body of the same nature as that outlined in the Cripps proposals would work out the new Constitution for an Indian Union, the Constitution being framed for British India, with provision for accession open to the States. In the meanwhile all political prisoners should be released and popular coalition Ministries re-established in Section 93 Provinces. At the Centre a National Government would replace the present Executive Council, the new Council being formed by a Prime Minister representing the largest single party in the Legislature but including important representatives of other parties. The Council would be entirely responsible to the Legislature.

The Committee took no cognizance of the partition of India; but to win Moslem confidence proposed an equal representation of Caste Hindus with Moslems in the Constitution-making body (Hindus 51, Moslems 51, Scheduled Castes 20, Sikhs 8, Others 14). It appeared that as a concession to Moslems for the recognition of the principle of "joint electorates," they would be guaranteed equal representation in the Union Assembly. If this is so, a layman is entitled to question the object of such an arrangement. The whole principle of a joint electorate is that eventual public representation in a Legislature should rest on principles devoid of the recognition of communalism.

Provision was made for the election of the "Head of the State," to hold office for five years, several methods of election being suggested. He would be vested with such powers as are now the functions of the Crown. All recruitment for the Civil Services by the Secretary of State would cease.

India's reactions in the Press were just those which might have been anticipated. The Moslem paper *Dawn* commented: "The Cripps proposal was a way of mercy itself as compared with the scheme elaborated by the Sapru Committee, because in the former plan some recognition was paid to the right of self-determination for the people who chose to be outside the contemplated All-India Union."

The admittance of parity in representation between Moslem and Caste Hindus received the inevitable condemnation of the Hindu Mahasabha, and Dr. Ambedkar, representing the Scheduled Castes, had nothing to do with the Committee. Support came only from the pro-Congress Press. In short, the labours of the Committee were rewarded by the same kind of reception which greeted the Cripps proposals, with variations in the distribution of abuse from the different parties.

Nevertheless the effort served a purpose, and some at least of its proposals were reflected in the subsequent announcement of the British Government in June 1945. It revealed too that the obstacles to framing an acceptable Constitution for India were not erected by an intransigent Britain and it went so far as to sanction an imposed Constitution, under conditions of the failure of alternative Indian agreement.

Council of 30 or 40 members, which in turn would be elected by provincial Legislatures in a manner to ensure both geographical and political interests being represented. In essence it would be a Coalition Government as opposed to majority rule. It is certainly in the knitting together of geographical and political elements that the future house of India could rise on sure foundations, and the nature of this process was perhaps recognized when in the British Government proposals of June 1945 it was suggested that provincial Premiers would be invited to join in discussion with political leaders.

On the 14th June 1945 the long-awaited announcement was made on behalf of the British Government by Mr. Amery in the House of Commons and by Lord Wavell in India. We should appreciate the nature and object of these proposals, for overnight they transformed a situation of barren deadlock into one of radiant hope. I confess that when I first started to frame this chapter at the end of 1944 I could not foresee interim arrangements taking shape previous to a constitutional "D day." If we were to initiate that vast national plan of reconstruction which was discussed in the previous chapter, it seemed to me that there must be efficient control by the planners themselves up to the last minute. Until "D day" there would still be the opportunity for an Indian solution to hold the field, and it would be during this period that we should be setting on its feet the great Reconstruction programme which the present Indian Government have sponsored. Discussion would take place and no effort be spared to frame a Constitution of Indian conception. But until that achievement the existing Executive would continue. It was decided otherwise; and obviously rightly so. Only in the event of the opening discussions leading to further deadlock was it proposed to continue the *status quo*.

We will examine the changes which were contemplated. The present Council was to disappear, and in its place Lord Wavell would have formed an Executive entirely composed of unofficial Indians with the exception of the Commander-in-Chief. Indians would have held the portfolios of Home and Foreign Affairs and Finance. To assist Lord Wavell in forming his Council a Conference was called in Simla in June 1945, and invitations were issued to the leaders of the Congress, the League, the Sikhs, the Scheduled Castes, the Nationalist party and the provincial Premiers. The eight Congress members of the Working Committee in jail were therefore released and the Committee met in Simla to reassess the new position and frame their Conference policy.

The intention was that parties should submit panels of names to the Viceroy from which he could make up the new team. To provide as broad and representative a choice as possible, they were also invited to add names of any Indians outside their own party whom they would be willing to see included in the Council. After some delay in deciding procedure eventually the Congress and the League were called on to submit between eight and twelve names each, the Scheduled Castes and Sikhs being allotted four and three names respectively. In submitting their list the Congress diplomatically went beyond the official arrange-

ment and included both the Presidents of the League and the Hindu Mahasabha in their list. They emphasized that they wished to stress the national character of the Congress; and for this reason their list was to be representative of India as a whole. This gesture was successful in winning them the approval of minority groups; and the Indian Christians in particular, who nursed a grievance at not having received an initial invitation to the Conference, expressed their approval. The Mahasabha who had received similar treatment were from the beginning loud in condemning the Conference and everything to do with it in terms of unqualified hostility.

The understanding was that the Viceroy would form the Council from the names submitted on a basis of Congress, League, and other parties being represented in the proportions 40:40:20; Congress and the League thus receiving parity of treatment. Mr. Jinnah on behalf of the League however insisted on reserving the right of the nomination of all Moslem names for the new Council, the League contention being always that Moslems were a separate nation and that parity with Caste Hindus was not sufficient. Parity with the total of all opposition groups was demanded.

It was against this rock of obstinacy that the Conference broke down. In effect the Moslem demand would have excluded the President of the Congress from the Council, not on the grounds that he led the great opposition party but because he was a Moslem! It would of course also have prohibited the Punjab Premier, as the leader of the most important Moslem Province, from participation. Much play was made with figures to indicate the small number of Moslems outside League circles in the provincial Assemblies; but the truth is that until the next elections no one can say to what extent the League's position has either advanced or receded. As indicated in another chapter, in the Punjab indications are that the Unionist Ministry's position has not been effectively challenged.

What are the advances or set-backs in these events? Perhaps the most significant gain is the new spirit which animates the Congress. We should appreciate that the leaders came fresh from the frustrated atmosphere of prison to the conference room. Many who have studied their past reactions on similar occasions were surprised to note how quickly they adjusted themselves to the new situation. Controversial permanent problems such as the final divorcement of responsibility of the Executive from the Viceroy and the Secretary of State and its complete attachment to the Legislature were not raised; nor was the Viceroy's continued power of veto questioned. At the moment, the ban on the All-India Congress Committee continues, so that this too might well have been produced as cause for a quarrel. It was an immense stride towards a fresh and happier relationship between the Administration as mirrored in the personality of Lord Wavell and the Congress leaders, when the latter recognized, for the first time since complete independence became their goal, an interim arrangement as practical, rather than

pressing the old sweeping demands for immediate finality. That is a position from which there must be no retreat.

The three years of apparent inactivity have therefore not been unproductive. From outside the Government, they gave men such as Sir Zafrullah Khan, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and Mr. Rajagopalacharia the opportunity to make their contribution; and we may be certain that such unofficial attempts, whether they bear immediate fruit or not, can only assist all those who plan India's future. Such efforts carry with them also an educative influence on public opinion in and beyond the British Commonwealth. From within, these years gave the wise man at the helm the opportunity to assess the situation in all its complexity and to formulate the decisions which, in consultation with the Secretary of State, led to the Simla Conference.

"So near and yet so far" might reflect public opinion on these events. We faced a situation balanced delicately, full of fresh hope, yet always pregnant with a vague sense of frustration in the fear that the men in Conference might prove unable to rise above the limitations of communal partisanship. Lord Wavell generously accepted responsibility for failure. This was wisdom in that it confirmed Britain's high intention to help and not to hinder. It should also conceivably allay the vehement communal Press campaign which would normally follow on the breakdown. But for those who study the psychology of leadership there is revealed a familiar situation of a leader who is unable to retreat from a position of League leadership which betokens the immediate interests of his generation of followers, rather than interests compatible with the broad outline of history and the welfare of mankind. How often have the men of Europe failed in just the same position!

The permutations and combinations of possible representative Councils are legion and at times the mathematical faculties of leaders were fully taxed. But behind the League's final refusal to submit their list to the Viceroy lay not so much objections to arithmetical arrangements as a fundamental fear. Once Moslems were in harness sitting daily in discussion with representatives of all parties, it might conceivably come about that under wise leadership a real harmony would creep into their deliberations. They would be planning together the war prosecution in all its complexity. Such an understanding once established would be difficult to destroy; and thus would fall to the ground the whole conception of two nations and of Pakistan. May it not have been a fear of the method of human nature which dictated League policy?

It was made clear that the formation of a new Council would carry with it the obvious obligation to prosecute the war against Japan with determination; for war is a business which brooks of no half-measures. In fairness to the Moslem League it should be recorded that it was their announced intention to take no step which might embarrass the Administration during the war. With so many Moslem families of League sympathies whose sons have given distinguished service to the armed forces, a policy aloof from the war would have been very unreal.

What of the immediate future? The Viceroy could, after an interval,

decide to invite representatives of parties other than the League to form a Government. Such a step would but follow a course which Mr. Jinnah himself was ready to see adopted, in the days when the Congress Working Committee were in jail. There might be a compromise, a few leaders being invited to participate in the existing Council. Political leaders are at present without executive experience. Apprenticeship would be of value and new blood would rejuvenate the Council and lend it a more popular appeal. Against this must be set the fact that with the main expression of Moslem political opinion out in the cold, the Administration would sail on a very uneven keel. It may even be decided to hasten elections, the known sentiment in the country being an aid to decide further policy.

We need not take the post-Conference comment from Indian leaders too seriously. Maulana Azad was unable to resist that curious twist of the imagination which seeks to find a hindrance to communal settlement in the presence of the British as a third party. Nehru still elings to the lofty but not very helpful contention that the communal problem is not fundamental. Much of this is the ordinary stock-in-trade of politics of which we have had recent vivid experience at home. At least we may count for the good that former prisoners are at liberty and there should be no return to the wilderness of estrangement which led to the sad events of 1942. There is a task ahead in the consolidation of this notable advance. The proposals originally included the appointment of a High Commissioner for Britain in India to watch British interests, thus leaving the Viceroy free to play his part as India's spokesman and representative. This arrangement must now presumably wait on future events.

And so we are back once more to the *status quo*. It is a sad reflection that failure came not in the greater technical task of framing India's future Constitution with elaborate arrangements to be made with the Indian States, but was encountered in the more simple preliminary of leaders deciding their own composition for a Council. With one minor adjustment the interim arrangement could have been accommodated within the existing Government of India Act. Meanwhile the Cripps proposals still hold the field for permanent planning.

That the League have contemplated some form of interim arrangement in the past seems fairly certain. On a previous occasion Mr. Jinnah defined his ideas in the following terms:—<sup>1</sup>

"Under the new Constitution there would be a transitional period for settlement and adjustment during which time British authority, so far as the armed forces and foreign affairs are concerned, would remain paramount. The length of the transitional period would depend on the speed with which the two peoples and Great Britain adjusted themselves to the new Constitution."

While the Constitution which Mr. Jinnah conceives may be of a different nature from that on which we ourselves pin our hopes, it is

<sup>1</sup> Interview to the Delhi representative of the *News Chronicle*, February 1944.

significant that an interim period of exploration with a considerable degree of British control was recognized.

But suppose that for one reason or another all further efforts to affect a basis of general agreement fail or, alternatively, that they take temporary effect now only to admit of subsequent failure when it comes to framing a permanent Constitution; suppose, to quote Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, "somebody else must fulfil their duty": what follows? We have then finally to settle the fate of India; and we are faced with either an indefinite continuation of the *status quo* or the enforcement of a new Constitution. That Constitution could be either Independence or Dominion status.

The Fourth Article in the Text of the statement of policy made on the 15th June 1945 reads:—

"While His Majesty's Government are at all times most anxious to do their utmost to assist India in the working out of a new Constitutional settlement, it would be a contradiction in terms to speak of the imposition by this country of self-governing Institutions upon an unwilling India. Such a thing is not possible, nor could we accept responsibility for enforcing such Institutions at the very time when we were by its purpose withdrawing from all control of British-Indian affairs."

I shall return later to the vexed question of "enforcement" with its implications; but for the moment I wish to follow up a more philosophical approach.

I think it is the American philosopher John Dewey who is a great exponent of the philosophy of experience. Briefly, this tells us that we may have to learn by war and poverty, by revolutions and national upheavals, by famine and pestilence. But the point is that sooner or later we *do* learn. After each war we are a little the wiser; admittedly not much, but sufficient to say with confidence that we progress. We have progressed since the days when we burnt men for saying the world was round or hung them for stealing sheep. Jawaharlal Nehru has used words to the effect that India must go through the experience of the "fire which cleanses." Gandhi too has spoken of bloodshed as the price of freedom. It is not clear whether this school of thought refers to revolutionary conditions in the process of winning freedom or in the subsequent condition of a free India. Much depends on the view taken as to the degree of disruption which would ensue on the abandonment of responsibility at the top. If, at the time, chaos and bloodshed are in fact the price of freedom, a freedom which satisfies the Congress Working Committee, then it would be wicked madness to commit 400 millions to revolution, chaos and the permanent collapse of ordered Government. It is indeed our declared intention never to accept such a criminal risk. But I do not for a moment believe that it will come to this. Nor do I believe that this is what any leader in India contemplates. We are not dealing with the India of the eighteenth century. Even in regard to

communal antagonisms India has advanced sufficiently for the leaders on both sides to be able to control the situation before it would deteriorate to civil war. There is far too great an element of common sense. It is mute, since the voice of educated moderation has no Press appeal; yet nevertheless it is there.

The time then has come when we must face the fact that so long as there is an Executive in Delhi which is not fully responsible to an electorate India will never learn the lessons of true nationhood, and it is on such premises that I do not exclude the possibility of a future Constitution which might in some measure be considered as enforced. Speaking in very general and imaginative terms there might be riots and strikes with some degree of communal disturbance. There might follow a flight of capital and a run on the banks. But as I see it, there would be no complete breakdown and a rather harassed Administration would muddle along experiencing its growing pains. Things must be worse before they can be better. That is the method of the process of experience; the fire which consumes and cleanses.

We have argued to a refusal of the perpetuation of the *status quo*, the alternatives being a settlement of Indian construction or the enforcement in some measure of our own solution. And it is that solution with which we are now concerned. We are back then to a choice of either an independent Republic or a Dominion Status in India. I read that the conception of a "Dominion Status" makes Jawaharlal Nehru "slightly sick."<sup>1</sup> I well understand Nehru's antipathy to the British connection. A man of his capacity and imagination would yearn to see his country standing on its own legs, planned and developed by its own statesmen. But Nehru's superior intellect, by its very distance from the masses whom he would direct, either fails to grasp their limitations or through pride fails to admit them. If Nehru could bring himself to travel the country not on a proselytizing mission but in a spirit of fresh inquiry, making contact with both welcome and hostile opinion, he will find everywhere a background ready for Dominion Status. The halo of a martyr sits easy, for its sanction is the applause of the crowd. The voice which is loudest may be the demand for complete independence. But the voice of those who think as opposed to those who shout is for a continued association with the British Commonwealth.

We must remember that we are speaking in terms of a Constitution which is being enforced. An independent India connotes some form of Republic with a constitutional President. Who would he be? A Republic might evolve as the result of Indian agreement but a Republic enforced by Britain has no relation to conditions and is too unreal for serious thought.

The idea of an enforced Constitution is one which is naturally repugnant and many Englishmen discard it as quite impossible. This indeed is the official view. "We cannot impose a Constitution that will

<sup>1</sup> *Journey Among Warriors*. Mlle. E. Curie.

break up the moment our authority is no longer there to sustain it." These were Mr. Amery's words in Parliament and he quoted Dr. Ambedkar in full support. Nevertheless, there is now in India a school of thought well prepared to accept a fresh interpretation.<sup>1</sup> We have to distinguish between a Constitution framed by Britain subsequent to Indian failure to agree and the further step of its enforcement. If, as we now know, Indians are prepared to ask Britain to frame their future for them, it is only logical to suppose that if necessary they are also prepared for the British solution to be enforced in so far as we would need to see it started. Enforcement then becomes a matter only of finding the necessary personnel to work a British-made Constitution sufficient to ensure acceptance of responsibility. It is true that, if that much cannot be achieved, we could not abandon India to an administrative vacuum.

There is left an enforced Dominion Status with an Executive completely responsible to an elected Legislature and a Governor-General whose task would be to hold his Cabinet together and see that at least there was ordered government. There is here one issue which needs some clear thought. If we recognize the principle of an Executive responsible to an electorate, we also must accept the possibility that that electorate might at a future date repudiate Dominion Status. That is a risk which must be accepted. But it would not alter the fact that previous to elections our enforced decision would still be that of Dominion Status. Some means would need to be devised by which the issue of Dominion Status was not at the mercy of the first elected Cabinet, and there would presumably be in the Legislature ample talent prepared to work a Dominion Constitution from which to form a Cabinet.

What are the advantages to India of a Dominion Status? To return once more to the more philosophical approach, does India wish to follow the teaching of Gandhi, to be left alone to lead its own life in its own way; or does it wish to compete in the international arena? Indians may accept Gandhi as the focus of nationalism and the fight for independence; but Gandhi the leader and Gandhi the philosopher are very different things. There is something rather defeatist about an Indian who says he would rather see his country out of the swim of international competition sleeping in oriental isolation while the rest of the world, with its admitted mistakes, moves by.

In criticism it has become the fashion to laugh at facts and vaunt theory, a luxurious mental process with which leaders with responsibility who direct lives can rarely afford to experiment, and which when proffered to those who seek enlightenment only leads them into a dangerous intellectual whirlpool. Accept then the fact that while geography remains in its present outline on the map, for many thousands of years a greater virility—I purposely refrain from claiming "superiority"

<sup>1</sup> Apart from recent indications from the Sapru Committee, in correspondence in *The Times* in March 1945 Sir Zafrullah Khan recognized that Britain might have to frame proposals and put them into force. Such an arrangement would continue so long as Indians were not agreed on an alternative.



—will spring from Europe and America than from the East. Wherever the cradle of man may have been in the early civilizations, those migrations which later peopled Europe have since dominated human endeavour and there has blossomed a rich and unquenchable fertile invention which has surpassed the East. This will continue, and for many eras the West will set the standard and pace of life. If this be faced, it is inevitable that, in an India which under its obscure idealistic leadership might drift into vague detachment in the lazy delusion that it was casting off materialism, inevitably as parasitic ivy clings to a tree, some expression of power from a Western source would creep back to engulf the Indian land again. I attempt no moral deduction; but state only the logic of events. If these fundamental truths could be recognized, how far more practical becomes the status of a Dominion within an ever-progressing family of nations. As a free Dominion there is given to India that slight sense of international security, economic and political, which would secure for her a place in international affairs. Can Indian nationalists seriously suppose that the world outside is going to be exercised very much over an unstable Indian Republic? Will trade, the vehicle of all international relationship in these circumstances, flourish? In leading to our conclusion of Dominion Status, we may at least be certain that comparative international isolation is not what India desires. It may lack the emotional appeal attached to the launching of a new nation. But it is first and foremost basically sound. It has fully satisfied the national aspirations of three great Dominions with a general standard of political conscience far in advance of that of India. In all reverence, for God's sake, may there be stability.

It is difficult on analysis to see in what respect Dominion Status fails to satisfy national aspirations. I myself feel that the initial stages will be full of doubts and difficulties. The risks of leadership, once responsibility has passed, are very different from its glamour before responsibility is accepted; and let there be no mistake. Full and final responsibility does pass with Dominion Status. The one feature which identifies a Dominion from an independent nation is that it presumably retains certain Empire obligations of tariff and mutual defence, understandings which would not attach to complete independence.

If India will accept this status as synonymous with freedom then we too will accept Mr. Gandhi's view that, with a satisfaction of pride on the main issue, the Indian Government would probably turn to Englishmen for technical assistance on a basis of complete equality. If that assistance was sought I believe it would be forthcoming. I, for one, would willingly take service in an Indian Dominion. But I would need a lot of persuasion and not a little material compensation to be induced to employment in an Indian Republican State! Nor for a moment do I suppose my services would be required. We have traced the future to a Dominion acquiring confidence as time goes on, a nation in experiment feeling its way through a certain era of some tribulation to an ordered and prosperous future.

I return to that habit of thought which might, I think, well be

preached from every pulpit of every denomination in the world: the process of searching for the best in every system and applying it in sociology, in politics, in our daily mundane affairs and in all life itself; the philosophy of eclecticism. What is to prevent the future India developing on the lines of a synthesis of the greater and more permanent values of both East and West? Can we not borrow from Gandhian immaterialism its spiritual teaching and intense patriotism and then harness these values to Western efficiency and energy? If the issue of a Dominion or an independent State be put simply as that of a continuation of association or a severance with Britain, I would insist that the true demand of India would be for the Dominion; for I cannot believe that the ties of two centuries are not too strong for severance.

I have left over for final analysis certain issues which the British Government would have to face in framing a Dominion Constitution. By far the most prominent of these is that of union or partition. Partition is against every creative instinct which has stimulated our constructive work in India. We have built up a vast machine whose life blood is symbolized in the great railways, roads, telegraphs and canals. One economic structure covers the land and one Army defends it. Even more so than the Army, those young services, the Navy and the Air Force, have risen on All-India loyalties, and in the Navy in particular communal distinction is unknown. Can we possibly look on with equanimity at the destruction of all our labour?

Only in one circumstance can I see the Indian Dominion being partitioned. If, as a result of the next provincial elections, a Moslem League Ministry takes office in the Punjab, then and then only will it become our duty to recognize partition. As a generalization it is a fact that the North-West contains elements which are more inclined to welcome a Dominion Status than the central and southern areas. We have also an indication that this would satisfy the Sikhs. It would therefore not be unnatural if a North-West Dominion emerged with its capital at Lahore with an adjoining State which would function as a Sikh-Hindu-Moslem coalition. Such an area, with the port of Karachi at its disposal, could, as a free Dominion, enjoy Empire trade in peace and call on Empire armed support in war. But this must come to pass only when those mainly concerned express their wish for it as an election issue and not as a result of Moslem pressure from the rest of India. It is more practical to enforce a partition than to force an unwilling element into partnership. But while that element remains willing, there is conversely no cause to force the partition. There comes a time when thought and argument just go round in circles and the whole issue becomes blurred. In these circumstances instinct becomes as logical a basis for decision as any other and it is on such premises that it seems inevitable to conclude that the other India, Hindustan, would also assume a Dominion Status.

It is clear that there can be no preliminary decision to divide India with a subsequent decision on the Constitution of the two portions. This being the case, the logical process would seem that previous to the

operative date of the actual partition, a referendum should be taken in both portions on the type of Constitution they might desire. We could decide the partition. They would decide the status. I have not the slightest doubt that both Pakistan and Hindustan would elect for Dominion Status. But let the choice be theirs.

The position of Delhi in a divided India would be curious. In a manner Delhi is the Jerusalem of India; for Hindu and Moslem fate has swayed around the battlefields which stretch out from Delhi to the Himalayan barrier. If the small State of Azad Punjab materialized, it is doubtful if the Jats of Hissar, Gurgaon and Rohtak would wish to be included in it. On the other hand, from my knowledge of them, I cannot see the Jats of these Districts being bound to a Hindustan divorced from Britain, for with the exception of the town of Bhiwani with its mills and Congress sympathies, the country-side is, through the Army, firmly loyal to the British connection and would insist on that connection being maintained. There are Jats on three sides of Delhi and it is just possible that Delhi might be regarded as the centre of a small Jat State harbouring Moslem, Hindu and British representation, a kind of international settlement as at Tangier, with the latent nucleus of the machinery of a reunited India, should that dream ever come to realization.

Of Bengal frankly one can see no ethnological argument strong enough to justify its separation as a Pakistan area. The two communities are so balanced that a small Moslem majority in its Government could not hope to carry Bengal as a separate State against the wish of a large minority so powerful in economic and intellectual pressure. It must work out its own solution and that solution lies in some form of coalition Government allied to the neighbouring State of Hindustan.

But perhaps the most delicate problem of all is that of the States and the manner in which they are to be fitted into the pattern. The attitude of the Princes has been clear. Just as Congress totalitarian methods when in office antagonized the Moslems, so their open hostility to the Princes drove the latter further from any possibility of an All-India understanding. The Princes realize that in the future Government of India, whether of a united or divided model, under Congress domination their day is doomed. Here I find myself in disagreement with Professor Coupland<sup>1</sup> when he suggests that if the rest of India could compose its differences and maintain its unity we could be assured that the Princes would not choose partition unless they were so compelled. My belief is that in any circumstances their expressed desire would always be for direct relationship with the Crown, even at the expense of a complete divorcement from an Indian Union or the portions of a divided India. I base this conclusion on a measure of acquaintance with many Princes and my reading of their psychology.

To-day we find the Princes clinging to their trust in existing treaties<sup>2</sup> and the issue of partition only interests them in so far as their relations

<sup>1</sup> *Report on the Constitutional Problem*. Vol. iii, page 150.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* Page 145, line 8, etc.

with the Crown might be endangered. At the same time they pay diplomatic lip-service to Indian aspirations for freedom, a gesture hardly compatible with continued relations with the Crown. There is, as I see it, a dilemma of conflicting interests. In the past the Princes have repeatedly been assured by the highest in the land that their treaty rights are sacrosanct. "Inviolable and inviolable" has been a term used, not by them, but by us. Since the passing of the East India Company we have scrupulously honoured these treaties and more than once have made impressive pronouncements concerning our intention to continue to do so.

In international negotiation treaties are invariably operative over a specified period of years. But in the case of the treaties with the Indian Princes this most important element seems to have been overlooked, and treaties are regarded as binding until the end of time. It is not for me to criticize the wisdom or lack of wisdom of those who framed the treaties. It is obvious that present-day conceptions of India's future would have been as unintelligible to them as a radio set or a rocket bomb. The unpleasant fact remains that in the altered circumstances we are contemplating breaking solemn treaty pledges. The Cripps proposals postulate that, whether or not a State adheres to the new Constitution of India, it will be necessary to revise existing treaty arrangements. While therefore their right of choice as between adherence to a divorced Indian Republican Union or a permanent partnership within the Empire is not questioned, their subsequent status within the partnership—for that will obviously be their choice—is not at all clear. It was with this ambiguity in mind that the States delegation to Sir Stafford Cripps submitted that "they should have the right to form a Union of their own with full sovereign status." It is on these lines that Professor Coupland develops the case for a Dominion of States though his final conclusion is that the separation of the States from British India is impracticable.<sup>1</sup>

Recently there have been developments which fully confirm the growing hostility of the Princes to treaty revision. On the 4th December 1944 the Standing Committee<sup>2</sup> of the Chamber of Princes resigned for the first time in its history. Previous to this the Committee had met the Viceroy in September and it was in continuation of these discussions that correspondence subsequently passed between Sir Francis Wylie, the Political Adviser to the Viceroy, and the Chancellor. The subjects under discussion ranged from attachment schemes<sup>3</sup> to post-war reconstruction. But by far the most important topic was that of treaty revision.

When I left India only the Press reports were available, but it was clear that vital future issues were being reviewed. The conditions under

<sup>1</sup> The argument is dealt with in great detail in *The Indian Problem*. Part III, Chapter XII.

<sup>2</sup> Chancellor: Nawab of Bhopal. Vice-Chancellor: Jam Sahib of Nawanagar. Members: Rulers of Indore, Dewas, Dungarpur, Patiala, Jaipur, Bikaner, Bilaspur, Rampur.

<sup>3</sup> These schemes refer to the attachment of very small States to larger neighbours for administration. The plan was mooted in 1942 and has hitherto been tested only in regard to small Kathiawar States and the large State of Baroda.

which the Crown Representative's obligations in regard to treaties could be transferred to another authority and the rights of States with regard to judicial powers within their territory were specifically mentioned. It was clear that attempts were being made to break the ice.

In commenting on these events the *Times of India* voiced the general opinion that, in resigning, the Standing Committee had acted precipitately. The Committee is responsible only to the Chamber of Princes, so that the Princes themselves must reconstitute their Committee if they wish to speak effectively in future negotiations. At a subsequent conference of Princes on education, medical relief and reconstruction, no reference was made to what might have been termed a "crisis," and all that appeared for public consumption was a statement to the effect that the Princes were "applying themselves earnestly to the progress of internal reforms within their territories."

In summing up the *Times of India* stated: "India's changing political and economic pattern necessitates adjustment from all parties, including the Princes, who desire a place in that pattern." The Princes certainly desire a place, but unfortunately that place is identically the one which they now enjoy.

It appears that what the Princes really want is some kind of special constitutional arrangement. Under existing treaties the Paramount Power has been free to control relations between States. Rulers have in return enjoyed sovereign powers and the protection of their sovereign rights, if necessary through force, by the protecting power. Only as a last resort, in face of grave maladministration, has a Ruler been deprived of his powers. It is clear that all these things are quite incompatible with any form of a Dominion of Princes as we understand the meaning of a Dominion; for a Dominion accepts the rights and obligations of a completely independent State. For example, one cannot visualize military assistance from England being dispatched to Australia to support the State of Queensland in a hypothetical situation of hostilities between Queensland and the Dominion Government at Canberra; which is the kind of situation we might well be called on to face in an India with a Dominion of Princes surrounded by hostile territory. For, make no mistake, without some modification of their present constitutional status neighbouring India in the new circumstances would be extremely hostile.

The problem therefore resolves itself not so much into a choice of honouring or dishonouring treaties—though undoubtedly this uncomfortable aspect is there—as into a question of our being able to continue to honour them in changed circumstances. The alternative, that constitutional changes should be held up on account of treaties with the Princes, is, of course, unthinkable.

Professor Coupland draws attention to the comparative homogeneity of the geographical grouping of the State areas stretching from Kathiawar on the west through Rajputana on into Central India, then turning south, negotiating some narrow corridors on through the States of Hyderabad and Mysore. Air communication might overcome the

narrow inconvenient ribbons of adjacent India. Personally I cannot visualize any groups of States agreeing among themselves sufficiently to form a united Dominion, and the whole conception of yet a third India becomes an administrative nightmare.

In the present circumstances it is difficult to write of what will happen. If the issue was put to a legal Court of Arbitration, they would probably give the verdict that treaty obligations could be modified only with the consent of the Princes. All the detached observer can say is what *should* happen in the light not of legality but of progress and the general welfare of the peoples of India. Viewed in this manner it is hardly common sense to suppose that the Paramount Power is required to maintain for ever, for argument's sake, any small Ruler over a hundred-odd square miles in splendid isolation when surrounded by an all-powerful vigilant Indian democracy eager to swallow him in his Lilliputian picturesque autocracy. It is only practical and right that the Raja with powers of life and death and revenue collection should bow to the inevitable and be prepared for his subjects to be carried into the greater stream which eddies round his rock of ancient content. It is possible that many of the Rulers would welcome the passing of their heavy responsibilities, assuming the more secure and in a sense freer status of mere wealthy landownership, such as is enjoyed by any big landowner in England. There is no reason why a young Indian should be suited to accept powers such as no other human category in this world possesses, any more than a young Englishman in a similar predicament. If we look back and examine the manner in which many of the States were created we would find that they were the children of chance and that fifty years of history in one direction or the other would have created a very different geographical grouping. Are not many of the present Rulers therefore possibly the most privileged community in the world and has not the time come when they should contribute their sacrifice to the common good? It would blunt the edge of treaty revision if changes were not made during the lifetime of present Rulers, the absorption of States into the surrounding India taking place as existing gaddis fell vacant. In this way the present heirs would have full opportunities to prepare themselves for a new life, and if they were citizens of any public spirit they could be an asset to the community in the same manner as many of the big families of England exercise a stimulating influence in local administration.

But to return once more to the practical difficulty of continuing to support States in the new conditions we anticipate, it will be realized that such support can only take the tangible form of maintaining troops for the purpose. Such troops could obviously not be drawn from a neighbouring Indian Dominion or Dominions. They would need to be troops from Britain. They would be there for one of two purposes. Either they would be required to preserve law and order within the State when the State Administration had broken down or they would be asked to protect the State territory from outside aggression. In the first case we could surely assume that the State Administration

was not worth preserving, while in the latter case we again face the impossible situation by which British armed force is asked to support one element of the British Commonwealth against another. The maintenance of troops for such purposes, so far from securing its ends, would exacerbate a thoroughly hostile atmosphere and be an invitation to civil war.

It is a sad reflection on treaty revision that it would seem impossible to devise a means of classifying States, not on a basis of size but on a basis of quality. States which are now well governed might have no difficulty in preserving their identity under a new Constitution for India. Yet who is to say which is a good or bad State? Some exceedingly happy and efficient little kingdoms must disappear if States are to be absorbed. There is the example of the small State of Gondal in Kathiawar which through years of guidance by a most enlightened Ruler<sup>1</sup> is a model of perfect equipment and administration. There is the great State of Mysore which can claim both quantity and quality. There is Travancore with probably a higher standard of literacy than obtains anywhere else in India. Why should these Administrations suffer for ubiquitous uniformity? There are Patiala and Jodhpur, powerful States of tradition and in recent years of wise administration. Are these most individual edifices to disappear? Most certainly if such States could negotiate fresh treaties with the new Indian Constitution which would continue their present status, they should be afforded every facility to do so.

But the more we weigh all these disconcerting factors in the scales of justice for all, we appreciate the necessity for bold changes. In recording that verdict it is impossible to set it down without deep regret, for with the passing of much which is anti-social, also passes the glamour and pageantry which surrounds these repositories of ancient pride. As one who has enjoyed much hospitality in the States, I do not welcome the prospect of seeing the light fade out on that colourful stage across which has passed the full brilliance of Indian history. If a Rajput Prince chose to challenge with force a decision depriving him of his rights, one would feel inclined to take the view that if he can successfully hold what he has, then it must be worth preserving. "Good luck to him," we would be tempted to say, in the belief that his subjects should know what they wanted. That is the call of sentiment. But it is the hard call of wisdom which must be obeyed.

The time has come to close the objective portion of this study and turn to a more personal approach. I have tried to set out the political issues so that they might be intelligible to the ignorant and interesting for the initiated. I would address the closing paragraphs to Englishmen. We have moved far from the days when we regarded our main obligation as one of unqualified rule; and I refer here to that interpretation of "Imperialism" which our opponents in India so delight to apply to the British connection in all its aspects. Yet even so, we find no unanimity

<sup>1</sup> His late Highness Maharaja Shri Bhagwat Sinhji, G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E. Held a Medical Degree of Edinburgh University.

of opinion on the Indian problem even from Englishmen with recent experience. Each man interprets the future in terms of his own psychology. If we were to draw on the more intimate experience of the Civil Service we would find divergence of opinion as expressed by Government Secretaries and young Deputy Commissioners. At home, the older servants of India point to the prospect of a slowing down of administrative efficiency and a general deterioration setting in as the result of communal partisanship. The younger generation hold to less confirmed views. The Englishmen who pass through India—and in war the Army has brought many thousands of young men—have little inducement to study the country and so their opinion is seldom of any value.

For those who view change with misgiving I suggest that so much depends on whether we are thinking in terms of five or fifty years. The Sargent Report concludes with a Chinese proverb: "If you are planning for one year, plant grain; if you are planning for ten years, plant trees; if you are planning for a hundred years, plant men." Well, we are planting men and it will make little difference if we plant them now or in ten years' time, for the seed will be much the same and we are certainly not thinking of short-term planning. Why therefore wait?

At the risk of labouring a point, I am returning to that faith in the scope for British endeavour in the future India to which I have referred more than once.

A recent episode in Sind of some significance, which has possibly passed unnoticed in England, deserves to be known. A certain Englishman, Mr. Roger Thomas, had settled several years ago in northern Sind where he built up a reputation as a progressive and very knowledgeable farmer. In October 1944 the Sind Ministry were in trouble with one of their members implicated in the murder of the late Sind Premier, Khan Bahadur Allah Baksh. There was therefore a vacancy in the Ministry, and contrary to all precedence Mr. Thomas was asked to fill the post as Minister for Agriculture, with the full approval of the Sind Ministry. I do not know whether the Premier, Sir Ghulam Hussain Hidayatullah, actually initiated the request, but the fact remains that all concerned welcomed the admission of an Englishman as a Minister.<sup>1</sup> It is the kind of situation which I hope and believe may frequently occur in the future. It however connotes that there should ever be ready a band of Englishmen to assume the most exacting yet the most exciting demands of human service in the interests of India and the Empire. Should Indian leaders desire this expression of service in a tangible form,

<sup>1</sup> There were subsequent unhappy and ominous repercussions which do not affect the point at issue. The Sind Ministry functions under the patronage of the Moslem League. Mr. Thomas's appointment was accordingly immediately questioned by Mr. Jinnah and a political prominence was given to the matter which Mr. Thomas had hoped to escape. Indeed, in accepting the appointment he made it clear that he owed no allegiance to any political creed. When Mr. Jinnah intervened on the grounds that a Moslem Leaguer had not been appointed, Mr. Thomas offered to resign. This was obviated by the Premier accepting the appointment as that of an honorary "adviser" and not a "Minister." This is but another example of obstruction to honest Government which the communal nightmare can exercise against the best interests of the people.



it would be necessary to meet their wishes by the formation of a highly specialized corps of young men in England, in which initiation to the new Indian conditions, with technical and language instruction, would be undertaken. But character and sympathy would need to be taken much into account. Perhaps there would be scope for that formidable modern process, psychiatry; a science of which I confess I had never heard until four years ago!

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It was five years since I had felt the life and pulse of the nation; and at first it seemed almost bewildering to find myself once again lost in an English crowd with the English pattern of life stretching out on all sides. The England I had left had been care-free; and here I was back in an England of a totalitarian war effort. I saw the grievous scars slashed across the face of the land and sensed I had in no way shared in all this tribulation. Those frailties which overseas we sometimes so readily notice in each other seemed to fade; and I felt suddenly the overwhelming sense of endurance and lasting power in this family of 45 millions; so vital to the world. It gave me that solid sense of confidence in the future which is born only from the realization of a high standard of education, an innate common sense and human tolerance; for these are the qualities which carry our people along to greatness. It is such thoughts which forbid us to doubt Britain's genius to guide India to full nationhood.

When searching through some records, I came across the following passage in a speech of a past statesman of the old Conservative school:—<sup>1</sup>

"I do not admit that Imperial patriotism of a kind may not be developed among the races that are not of British origin. Perhaps it will never be of the fervid type, but to say that is not to say that it must be based on purely material considerations. Given complete equality of status with their British fellow-countrymen, they may not be insensible to share its burdens and its glory."

Those words were spoken in the days when we could hardly have hardened our conjecture for India to that of full Dominion Status. There is perhaps the imperceptible hint of patronage behind them which might irritate only the few Indians who would look for irritation. The word "Empire" might arouse suspicion and to-day it is fashionable to speak of "the Commonwealth." If the name excites anyone let them call this loose brotherhood what they will. If some of us prefer the caption of "Empire," our one and only wish is still that India should go forward in free and equal partnership. Could the issues be comprehended by those millions to whom this book is dedicated and could their voice be heard, I am convinced that their verdict would endorse that wish.

<sup>1</sup> Lord Milner. Author's Club, 1912.

Five years ago upon my office table, in the litter of the morning mail with its useless befogging *Government Orders, Gazettes and Schedules*, believe it or not, I came across the following incredible passage:—

“In exercise of the powers conferred by sub-section (4) of Section 2 of the Defence of India Ordinance, 1939, the Central Government is pleased to direct that the powers or duties conferred or imposed upon the Central Government under the provisions of the Defence of India Rules specified in Column 1 of the Schedule hereto annexed, shall be exercised or discharged to the extent in the case of Rule 61 of the said Rules, specified in the corresponding entry in Column 3 of the said Schedule, by the authorities specified in the corresponding entry in Column 2 of the said Schedule.”<sup>1</sup>

So dreadful did this literary monstrosity seem at the time that I remember a pause in the day's work for quite a while until my Head Clerk brought me back to earth. Sadly I wondered if this was the sum total of our work in the land; a present, year in year out, of a thousand such sentences on a thousand office tables for the bewilderment of many thousands of honest good citizens of India. What capital could be made from this, so I brooded, in the hands of the smart young champions of elusive freedom. I felt inclined to post it straight away to Mr. Gandhi!

And then I recalled another passage which years ago I had tried to memorize; for in it I have always read the substance of all our endeavour; no matter that it came from a giant imperialist, a man who might shudder could he see the political labyrinth of to-day.

His words should and must guide those Englishmen who may yet contribute their research in the laboratory of the great Indian experiment:—<sup>2</sup>

“To fight for the right; to abhor the imperfect, the unjust or the mean; to swerve neither to the right hand nor to the left; to care neither for odium or abuse or flattery or applause—and it is easy enough to have any of them in India. Never to let your enthusiasm be soured or your courage grow dim. But to remember that the Almighty has placed your hand on this the greatest of his ploughs, in whose furrow the nations of the future are germinating and taking shape; to drive the blade a little forward in your time, and to feel that somewhere among these millions you have left a little justice or happiness or prosperity, a sense of manliness or moral dignity, a spring of patriotism, a dawn of intellectual enlightenment or stirring of duty where it did not exist before. That is enough. That is the Englishman's reward in India.”

<sup>1</sup> Government of India Notification, 4th November, 1939.

<sup>2</sup> Lord Curzon. Byculla Club, Bombay, 1905. On the eve of his departure.

## PART TWO

## CHAPTER XIV

## THE CHARACTER OF INDIA. LIABILITIES AND ASSETS

IT COULD BE SAID WITH SOME FORCE THAT THE CHARACTER OF INDIA HAS been so fully subjected to international diagnosis that further research is now of little profit; that Indians are well aware of those disabilities which exercise a drag on progress and that they will only turn sour with constant reminders. Every Indian, for instance, accepts the communal bogey. Why therefore continue to dot the i's and cross the t's? Certainly, with a spate of Indian literature on the market, further examination is superfluous unless it is thorough and has something new to say.

It is because I have felt the whole subject has not had very scientific handling that I am adding these conclusions. Criticism of the Indian character is so often either blunt to the point of bad taste or is avoided altogether. It is curious that many European writers who would claim to champion Indian political aspiration seldom follow up their sympathy with any analysis of either Indian failure or excellence. In regard to the communal question we could hardly effect further deterioration and our continued attack may conceivably come home, if not to the Jinnahs and Mukherjees, then possibly to the more humble homes of the great middle piece of India.

It surely all began with geography. You do not need to have read *The Origin of Species* or *Evolution and Ethics*. You need only the evidence of your own eyes. It is the climate and topography of a country which decide the character of its people. If it were not so, you could take 100,000 Finns and put them down in Sind and you could put a similar number of Sindhis into Finland and expect to find them both unchanged in 50 years.

A nation's character is absorbed unconsciously. In England we are not conscious of the fact that our character has been largely governed by the 21 miles of sea which separate us from Europe. Not only does geography mould character; but its influence takes effect rapidly. When you walk down Piccadilly it would be quite impossible, from studying faces, to say whether the men and women you pass were of Norman, Saxon or Roman stock. Further from your own circle of friends you cannot guess at their origin from either their appearance or behaviour. You can only say that, apart from their individual characters, they all seem to share a common approach to life and you term that quality "The English character." Examine further and you find that it has been given them by cold winter winds and warm, mild summers,

by the lime soil which gives them good cattle and, above all, by the sea which betokens their independence.

If then there be fault or merit in a nation it is not so much a question of congratulation or abuse. It is a matter largely of chance. Assuming the approximate truth of these principles, in an analysis of the Indian character the critic must not only draw attention to those qualities which handicap Indians in the mastery of their own affairs, but also to the fact that so many Indians in all spheres of human endeavour have so successfully overcome the constant pressure of climate and poverty.

I emphasize this lest some subsequent conclusions be mistaken for the attempt of a precocious imperialist to inflict some form of humiliation. I would have Indians who read this believe that I personally have never experienced any of those reactions known as "racial prejudice." I accept my orders from any man who is professionally qualified to give them to me, whoever he may be; and I would loyally serve under the many thousands of Indians whom I know to be mentally and morally better than myself.

Where therefore I criticize, my only motive is to face up to facts; facts which I conceive India should recognize in her own interest, in view of her future tremendous responsibilities.

India being subject to the same natural laws as any other part of the world, we may assume a national character established over the whole continent as apart from certain very distinct sub-national tendencies. Such an assumption immediately cuts across the two-nation hypothesis of the Moslem League. It postulates that the Moslem invasions came and certainly conquered in the North; but that subsequently, although two religions remained, indigenous influences absorbed the national tendencies of the invaders and there remained one character, and that was an Indian one.

This interpretation of India's ethnographical history is fully in accordance with scientific conclusion which insists on the attenuating nature of so-called "races." Professor Julian Huxley<sup>1</sup> writes:—

"Historically all the great modern nations are well known to be conglomerations and amalgamations of many tribes and of many waves of immigration throughout the long period of time that makes up their history."

He then quotes the rapid absorption of the Greek colonies of Marseilles into Gaul, and of Britain herself with immigration waves from the third millennium B.C. onwards.

He further asserts that the occupation of a country within definite geographical boundaries, with climatic conditions which include a distinctive mode of life, are among the factors which contribute in greater or less degree to the formation of national sentiment. For our purpose the lesson is that while the natural and true national tendency may be in one direction, the nation, which is a political creation, waits

<sup>1</sup> "Race" in *Europe*. Pamphlet by Prof. J. Huxley.

on the will of man. Nature may indeed pave the way for national evolution. Conditions of geography and climate may point down the road to nationhood; but men do not necessarily take the hint and in India they certainly have not done so. The tendency of Moslem thought, therefore, to invoke *natural* causes as the root of Hindu-Moslem antipathy does not bear scientific examination.

I have encountered circumstances which might be taken as supporting the Moslem view. Suppose that there are two Deputy Commissioners, the one a Moslem, the other a Hindu. However good an Indian Deputy Commissioner may be, there is hardly one in my experience of whom it could be said that he had entirely escaped the communal influence. Thus, the Moslem Deputy Commissioner will keep appointments for his Moslem friends and the Hindu will do the same for Hindus. Now at first sight this might be held to indicate their difference. Yet to me it only indicates their essential similarity!

We should distinguish between differences of religious function and differences of national character. Religious leadership in the days of the Moslem invasions being fanatical on both sides, mutual persecution was the order of the day and so religious intolerance was perpetuated; and the torch has been handed on to modern leaders. It is to-day less violent but more insidious. The point which demands clear thinking is that religious animosity which has been handed down does not necessarily indicate basic differences of character. On the contrary the laws of nature have in their course given the people of India a common outlook and there is ample scope for the exploitation of that background to make of India a homogeneous unit if India's leaders cease to confuse politics and religion. Communal antagonism is therefore the first and foremost obstacle to political and social progress, and just as the barriers have been built up by human folly, so only human wisdom can break them down.

I do not intend to waste time in probing much further, for to labour communalism is to invite boredom. From many hundreds of practical indications of its continued operation on all levels I recorded at the time two cases which illustrate the kind of confusion against which an All-Indian Administration will have to fight.

The first case was that of an acting Hindu Deputy Commissioner with whom I stayed over a week-end. He had just been transferred from another District where he had been working as Extra Assistant Commissioner under a Moslem Deputy Commissioner. He solemnly assured me that his late master had constructed a case against him for aiding and abetting the procurement of two gallons of Government petrol for a third person. The motive advanced was that the Deputy Commissioner knew that he knew that the Deputy Commissioner had accepted a bribe of 50,000 rupees from a United Provinces sugar contractor for the importation of sugar into his District. It was as sickening a story of bribery, corruption and communalism as one could wish to hear; and told over the breakfast table it put me in ill-humour for the rest of the day.

The second example, typical of thousands, is a letter from an Army pensioner concerning those desperate efforts of the Administration to count Hindu and Moslem heads every time a Government appointment is made:—

“Sir,

“Most humbly and respectfully I beg to lay the following few lines before your good self for consideration.

“About a year ago my son, Rakha Singh, was appointed a taxation clerk at Hoshiarpur under the orders of the Deputy Commissioner, from the post of patwari. I presume in both posts he discharged his duties satisfactorily. It is said that the District Taxation Officer on his visit to Hoshiarpur objected that the two clerks in the office were a Hindu and a Sikh and that no post had been offered to a Mohammedan and the Government order regarding communal proportions had not been observed. So I am afraid that my son who is the junior clerk . . . will be thrown out on the above excuse.

“Sir, in my estimate, the strength of the office has already been based on the communal ratio. There is one Moslem inspector, one Moslem sub-inspector, one Hindu sub-inspector and one Hindu clerk. I beg to submit that the communal ratio for this District is, Mohammedan 35%, Hindu 35%, Sikh 20%, others 10%. . . .”

There then follow two pages of hysterical doubt not on the fact of his son's retrenchment but on the fear of it happening. The letter ends with the usual tabulation of the family services to Government.

It is my conviction that many thousands of educated Indians view communalism with despair as an evil spirit from which there is no escape. I have certainly heard as fierce condemnation from Indians as from any Englishman. I remember Mr. Sleem, the Punjab Advocate-General and former Indian Davis Cup representative at Wimbledon, putting the folly of the whole business to me in the following way: “Hang up a large piece of raw meat on a tree,” he said, “and watch until a Hindu and Moslem approach from opposite directions, and see who starts the fight first!” Tolerance, he maintained, was not necessarily a quality which would remove the evil. The so-called toleration of another man's demands merely perpetuated a situation of fundamental intolerance. Suppose that a Hindu procession wanted to pass by a mosque with music and the necessary official consent was obtained with the sanction of the Maulvi. It was not so much the tolerance of the Maulvi which was to be commended as the request of the Pandit on behalf of his procession which was to be blamed. This legal aspect carried some conviction, but it is a difficult premise from which to suggest any practical action.

All this may seem incomprehensibly stupid to the men and women of England. It is so. It represents a situation in which the chief Ministers in three large areas of the size of the United Kingdom would lose their jobs if it was known that they had had bacon for breakfast!

But to return for a moment to the principles of national evolution; it seems appropriate here to sort out finally the confusion of loyalties which assail an educated Indian. He is asked to be loyal to so many things; a Province, a United India, a British Raj, and a religion. The wonder is that he is able to define what exactly he does want. Are his sentiments mainly for an All-India conception or are they for his Province? Assuming that the present provincial boundaries are in keeping with the broader sub-national divisions of India, is the average Indian first a Punjabi or a Bengali, and only subsequently a citizen of India? or is he first and foremost just an Indian? It is a question to which a direct reply in terms of "yes" or "no" cannot be given; and I would answer it in the following manner.

Round India's political leaders move entourages whose loyalties are, in the case of the Congress and the All-India Hindu Mahasabha, to a United India, and, in the case of the Moslem League, to Pakistan. Their loyalties are not concerned overmuch with provincial boundaries. The Mahasabha in particular regards the vivisection of India with horror. But allowing for the power of these great organizations, I am of the view that the average voter—and he is the man who counts—is more concerned with local politics than with interests of an All-India nature.

The big meetings held all over the country would seem to contradict this. Thus, if Jahawarlal Nehru was to stage a meeting in any big town in the Bombay Presidency or the Punjab, his own home being in the United Provinces, resolutions concerning All-India politics would be carried with unbounded enthusiasm. But that would not necessarily give a fair picture of the minds of the local population. Any political meeting of importance always brings with it a large army of ardent devotees from outside and apart from this every single local disciple may be depended upon to attend.

This is particularly noticeable in the case of the meetings of Mr. Jinnah. I once attended a meeting in a Punjab town under the caption of the "Moslem Students' Conference," presided over by Mr. Jinnah. As usual, the Qaid-i-Azam had his audience worked into frenzied paroxysms of enthusiasm. On the visible evidence the town at that moment might well have been the prospective capital of Pakistan! Yet one knew that in fact this was far from being the case. The big spectacular meetings are therefore not a gauge of local sentiment and I repeat my belief that if a generalization can be made the man of education is more concerned with his Province than with All-India affairs.

To go further into the matter, there are first the mute illiterate peasantry to whom politics are unintelligible. As a Civil Liaison Officer I attended many local fairs and religious gatherings. I would frequently approach groups or family parties on holiday, Jat Sikhs, Gujars, Nahangs, Chamars, and the like, and question them on the topics of the day. They usually knew Gandhi by name, but they had never heard of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the Congress President.

In contrast, they frequently knew the name of their own Premier and invariably knew of Sir Chhotu Ram, the Revenue Minister. These were indications on the lower level. Higher up the scale one encountered the legal profession, a fair cross-section of educated India. Any small town with a population upwards of 20,000 supports a dozen or so pleaders. Jullundur City boasted a Bar of some 60 pleaders and I came to know some of these gentlemen intimately. I found that while they were profoundly interested in All-India politics they regarded the politics of Lahore as actually governing their daily life; and this, I felt, was exactly as it should be. Let a man first be loyal to the soil on which he lives, and then on local loyalties he can build the firm foundations of a wider federation. You cannot put the roof on before the walls are up.

Certainly, in the Punjab local affairs absorbed the public interest. How clearly I remember the intense interest displayed in the Punjab eastern towns in the provincial ministerial crisis in May 1944. On the 14th May I passed through Lahore on my way to a new appointment. My old friend, Kartar Singh Diwana, had kindly staged a farewell party and the leading Sikhs of Lahore were there in force. They were in a fever of excitement when Sardar Baldev Singh, the Sikh Minister, arrived to announce the names of the two new Ministers. Truly, the affairs of Mr. Gandhi are more often than not far in the background, in spite of the constant efforts of the Press to present them as dominating the scene. It is of passing interest to note that the immediate reactions of my Sikh friends at the party were not expressed in terms of any opinion as to whether the new Ministers were competent or otherwise for their appointments, but were governed by the fact that the two new Moslem appointments to replace one would lower the Sikh percentage of representation in the Ministry!

The human folly of communal division, once under way, is epidemical. The Congress exclude the Moslem League. The Moslems unite. The Moslems exclude Sikhs. The Sikhs and the Hindu Mahasabha unite. The Mahasabha excludes the Scheduled Castes, and the Scheduled Castes unite. There is no end to the process and the greatest folly of all is that it is mainly based not on action itself but on the fear of action. The habit once started in a tribal way percolates down to individual processes, and partisanship and nepotism govern individual relationships. It attacks the high and the low. Indeed it is more obvious in high places since it receives greater publicity.

In the Army a regimental officer recognizes it in the case of the Jemadar's nephew by marriage whose name is subtly presented for promotion. Fortunately, since the Army works to a system of discipline, we can meet and defeat the menace at its source. In civil life the kind of manifestation is that A will have an obsession that he is unable to get a square deal from B and the only way for A to compete is to enlist the services of C at a price sufficient to prevent C from repeating the story to B. One thing leads to another and a whole series of complex



repercussions are set in motion. I select only one in illustration. It is the written recommendation.

When I left my appointment in the Civil Liaison organization, I hoped that a small circle of friends, which included my staff, would rise above the surreptitious interview with its broad hint that before leaving I should take some kind of action for their individual advancement. I was doomed to disappointment. On innumerable occasions during this period I was asked to give letters of recommendation for people whom I had never met. The excuse to approach me was either on the grounds of loyal family services to Government or of work rendered to me by a relation or perhaps only an acquaintance with a mutual friend. I finally had a notice made in Urdu on my office table. It read :—

“This is a welfare office to help the families of soldiers at the war. It is not an agency for handing out recommendations to men whom I do not know, for other men whom I do not know, for jobs of which I have no knowledge.”

It was, alas! displayed all too frequently. But the applicant usually accepted the answer with humour and good grace.

These are the many disabilities which beset the land and which, it might logically be argued, all initiate from a man-made communal problem. But there are those other tendencies, the more fundamental effects of climate and geography to which Englishmen also have been subjected and to which they can testify.

The strong will and iron constitution survive and are all the more prominent in their survival. Of such solid fabric were the Nicholsons and Lawrences. Yet the fact that certain heroes in India flourished under adverse conditions—and will always do so—only indicates that these men would probably be heroes anywhere and in more agreeable climatic conditions would have risen even to greater mental and physical attainment.

If we look back at the broad outline of Indian history we see an era not unlike the early centuries of Central Europe. Kings and their Kingdoms rose and fell and the great Hindu epics are stories of rivers of blood. Bribery, corruption and intrigue most certainly played their part in directing ever-changing loyalties, but the actual business of war kept men's minds fully occupied; so that in between the periods of the clash of mighty armies we witness kingdoms of comparative Utopian stability. Impose on this picture two influences; the Moslem invasions and the British administration. The one excited the land to further wars while the other imposed limitations on the power to wage war: and the people frustrated in physical mutual destruction have turned to self-expression in a thousand insidious manifestations. In such a situation men and women invoke the worst material education which Western civilization can offer. It is in such vague processes that the modern general administrative morality in India has been nursed through the years into its present condition.

Indian nationalists have themselves been quick to criticize administrative morality. Their case is that where there is an alien Government there will always be men who will stoop to backstair methods, their only interest being the retention of their appointments for good pay. A Government job is but an aspect of the acceptance of a bribe. From a vast arena of graduates it is easy enough to attract those who play for safety.

Here we are at the parting of the ways. The nationalist supposition amounts to an assumption of two castes, the one loyal to India of the highest political morality; the other disloyal to India and a serpent of bribery and corruption. The fact that thousands of young men who fail to obtain Government posts immediately drift into the opposite camp must give the lie to this claim. A National Government will have to face up to exactly the same problems of malpractice in low and high places as the Government of India contends with to-day. Further, the claim that patriotism is the monopoly of those in opposition to Government needs to be firmly challenged. Members of the Executive Council, both past and present, are as true sons of India as any in the land. The simple truth is that they have recognized the value and need of the British connection and the grave danger of abrupt and revolutionary change and have in their wisdom chosen the path of evolution and co-operation.

We have spoken of climate. After many years of hot weathers I found myself no more reconciled to the six months from April to September than I was on the first day I landed. An Englishman's professional output of useful work definitely drops by about 50 per cent. If then, instead of facing the cycle over a few passing years, it is a matter of consecutive generations, it will be appreciated that the Indian Continent labours under a climatic blight which Westerners never experience. The open spaces of the desert would indeed be better soil on which to sow the seeds of a national character. There at least a man must fight only nature for existence and in the struggle he achieves a wild nobility. But in India conditions both encourage life in full profusion and simultaneously sap that same life's energy as it propagates. The Indian must struggle not only with nature but against his own brother; for human life multiplies far quicker than the wheat or rice which is to sustain it, and the result of two men trying to eat the bread for one is that both survive only at the expense of halving their daily output. It is this factor that dictates the pace of life in India. Reduced to an everyday experience it is the reason why buying a railway ticket or cashing a cheque is such an irritating experience as compared to a similar matter in England.

The tendency to blame an alien central Government for all evils has been referred to, and occasionally I found myself regarded as the agent of a distant control, to be set on when local administration went wrong. Without any premeditated hostility some of my friends had a way of opening up an attack with a comment such as, "The entire police force is corrupt," glaring at me in the meanwhile in the insinua-

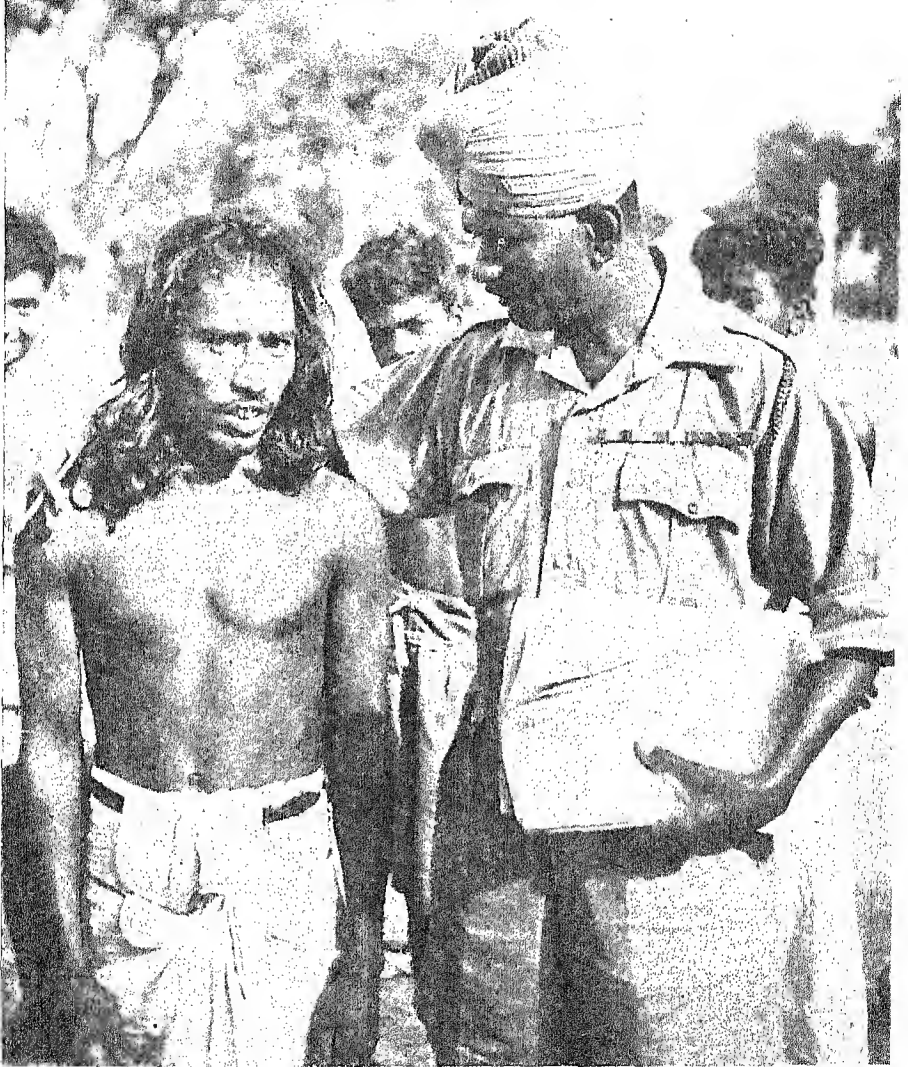
tion that I was somehow to blame! Of course certain policemen were corrupt. We all knew it, including the police themselves. But the police were men born and bred of the same soil which raised the citizens who attacked them; and the sins of the police are the sins of India, not of Britain.

We are assessing the debit account and it is a formidable task. We have seen how one disability leads to another. If the process be a real one then much is explained. There is the pervading motive of quick profit in business and the acceptance of second-class standards in manufacture. These I believe to have been born of many eras of the insecurity of life in general and of property in particular. Yet it would be of little use to ignore them, merely because they can be scientifically explained. Long-term methods may be appreciated by the very big firms, but lower down the scale the desire for the quickest possible return on capital outlay is everywhere evident. Witness the passenger lorry plying for hire along the road, crowded to capacity with its back axle springs straightened to breaking-point; a few extra fares for halving the efficient life of 4,000 rupees-worth of property. Alas, too, witness the overcrowded tonga and the starved lame pony, the maximum horsepower flogged out of him for the maximum working time; and then death. It was a spectacle that moved me to angry interference many times on the Grand Trunk Road, to the complete bewilderment always of the driver and the passengers.

India's industrial expansion is only just beginning. If we are to create an industrial conscience, both in business morality and standards of efficiency, I can only suggest a vast extension of the present "Bevin boys" scheme by which young men from India train by batches in England, experiencing all aspects of industrial control and process. I once came across a son of Sir Jogendra Singh<sup>1</sup> who was superintending a large vegetable dehydrating plant in the Punjab. He spoke in almost reverential terms of the old Sheffield foreman who had taught him never to be content with any piece of work which did not bear the stamp of perfection. It was now his object, he assured me, to hand on that standard in India so long as opportunities came his way.

I have just two more points to make on this side of the account. I refer to the Indian sensitivity and rarer conceit. These are by no means attributes amounting to features of the national character, for they are encountered more markedly in certain sub-national groups than in others. Again I resort to the personal experience. As a Civil Liaison Officer it was my duty to help and advise young candidates for commissions. Some of these would write letters telling me of troubles experienced as Cadets, of disappointments, successes and failures. There were border-line cases, boys who only needed a small extra dose of tactful tutorship to turn them into good leaders and who, if they missed this, would almost certainly be up before the authorities for political agitation. It was in dealing with such cases that one came to realize the highly sensitive nature of young India.

<sup>1</sup> Member for Education, Health and Lands in the Viceroy's Executive Council.



*[Crown Copyright Reserved]*

### THE RECRUIT'S PROGRESS

1. The Havildar makes friends with a likely recruit.



*[Crown Copyright Reserved]*

2 Chest measurement



*[Crown Copyright Reserved]*

3 His weight is taken



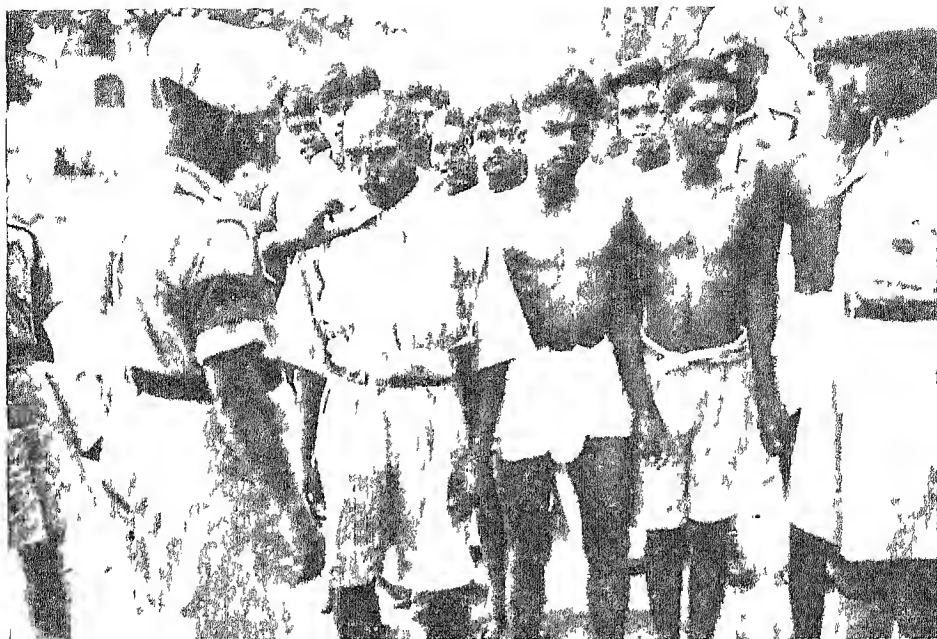
*Copyright Reserved*

4 A hancut



*Copyright Reserved*

5. Medical inspection.



6. Kit issue.

*[Crown Copyright Reserved]*



7. His first education.

*[Crown Copyright Reserved]*



My prescription always amounted to "less talk and emotion and more thought and guts." I believe this is what is required of the Indian who seeks to serve his country whether it be in politics or in a profession. A young man will work himself up into a fever of excitement and dash off pages of hysterical nonsense over some trivial disappointment. It is this same ready excitability which we recognize in several European nations and which, to put it mildly, we despise. It accounts for the fact that a minor clash of a Hindu and a Moslem on a trivial misunderstanding will in five minutes develop into a riot with hundreds of casualties involved. It moves young men to lie down in front of trams under the illusion that this will win freedom for their country. It explains why a few dissentient voices at a meeting will cause an uproar, while a unanimous verdict will carry them away on waves of exuberant enthusiasm. Enthusiasm is a quality without which all achievement is hollow. But it can be displayed to disguise a lack of mental solidarity and so often evaporates when the immediate stimulant is withdrawn.

Of that other quality, conceit, I do not associate this with India, but only with certain types of Indians. A Sikh youth who wanted a King's Commission once walked into my office and reinforced a list of his own superlative qualities with the startling conclusion, "Of course I shall win the Victoria Cross!" Had he looked the type that might be a candidate for the highest award, his abundant self-confidence might have been excused. But he was an undersized, overdressed young man and I was not surprised when he was failed by his preliminary interview Board.

The ready expression of one's own achievements is something foreign to English people. It is a characteristic which young nations particularly exploit. I repeat that, as a national manifestation, it is not an Indian attribute, though in all honesty I believe Indian leaders of the future will need to attack the task of administering their Continent in a greater spirit of modesty than is at present evident. The world outside is full of both wisdom and scoundrels, and in foreign relations, at least, an Indian Cabinet would be wise to work to the cautious assumption that they are beginners at the game.

We have spoken of many attributes and before we close the debit assessment we may consider that great sentiment which is daily gathering strength and which in its manifestation hovers between the lofty urge to greater things and a drag of degradation on all national progress. I refer to patriotism itself.

Patriotism is a quality which all men of understanding appreciate. I confess, too, to my personal admiration for those Indian leaders who, consistently pursuing policies which we believe to be barren, seek and endure long terms of imprisonment. When a man of action and ability elects to spend the best years of his life in prison, it does at least indicate a mental toughness which commands my respect. I appreciate the smouldering resentment which an Indian of intellect will experience when he encounters any form of overbearing aggression from a careless Englishman. I realize that for him that particular Englishman and therefore all Englishmen will remain just foreigners on the soil of his native land.



But in admitting this much the truth is still that intelligent patriotism, expressed with human good will, must lead India a great deal further in the future years than a more spectacular display of the love of one's country, which may command the popular but ill-disciplined applause of the crowd. I return always to the conclusion that if Indians, and particularly India's youth, would give more sober reflection and study to the problems of their country and less hysterical unqualified patriotic lip-service, those problems would the sooner be solved.

That finishes my summary of India's sins of commission and omission. Hundreds of Indians have readily admitted all this to me on countless occasions in private conversation. To them is due a final word of defence. They are accused of the tendencies of collaboration. It is unpatriotic to admit to failures of India and Indians. I cannot accept this view. I feel that to admit your faults is but to display a healthy honesty which is far nearer to overcoming them than is smothering them in a false sense of national pride.

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It is pleasant to turn from a citation of pessimism to a summary of the many graces of Indian life which make the passing of twenty-five years a dim but rich memory of affection. So often one discovered excellence of mind and character in the very low. We turn then from the mundane occupations of driving a tonga or servicing a car to the labours of traditional village artisans and we immediately encounter the highest ideal of achievement. The work in itself may be extremely simple; but the desire is there to do it well. The *mochi*, whose family has for generations made *chaplis* and brocaded shoes, sets about his work with patient diligence and industry. He incidentally copies patterns from the West perfectly and with the simplest implements reproduces Bond Street footwear. So it is with the potters and weavers. The profession may be primitive, but the pride of workmanship is there. Many of us would join with Mr. Gandhi in a campaign to revive the indigenous village industries. But with the march of time if India is to compete as a nation in the markets of the world, a degree of industrialization is inevitable and so long as the balance between industry and agriculture is continually reviewed such evolution will not disturb the country's economy.

I think it would hardly be fitting for one who is concerned mainly with the practical problems of modern India to attempt to enter that world of metaphysics in which India has excelled. The philosophy of the mystic flourished as it never could have in the concise sophistication of the West. Some men are wondering if the whole Western system of materialism will, through the wars which it carries in its trail, destroy itself and then have to turn to the East for comfort. Such philosophical issues are not to be touched on lightly and some day perhaps I shall satisfy a vague urge to examine it all and write another book. But for the present I have been far too absorbed in the intensely stimulating

interest attaching to those men and affairs with which I came into contact, and the India of Tagore or Swami Vivekananda must wait on my post-war leisure.

In my own experience I owe my appreciation of some of the great qualities of heart of India's citizens to contacts made with those Indians and their families who have taken service in the enormous machine of Government. I often wish I could have made closer social contact with the India of the Congress, but in Bombay where there might have been opportunities the Congress High Command did not encourage their disciples to participate in official or semi-official social functions. It seemed that they were determined not to run the risk of the two groups concerned getting to like each other!

Of friendships in the Army it is easy to write, for they were of that simple intimate nature which demanded neither effort nor thought. The relationship of British officers with Indian officers of the Viceroy's Commission<sup>1</sup> is something which only those concerned really understand. It is moreover something the India of education seldom sees or wishes to see. Doubtless too the same accusation can be made in regard to officers of the Army and their attitude to the India of politics. I will not probe further. I only wish to make the point that this community, the Indian officers and men of the Army, represent a very solid block of men who know something of the value of discipline, steady thought, method, physical excellence, humour and kindness. That they are also conservative and bigoted does not detract from these facts. They are and will be an asset to India.

But to return from the particular to the general, I would say that foremost of the qualities which an Indian carries on his sleeve is a genius for friendship. If you can establish two minutes of pleasant conversation with the slightest excuse of a mutual interest, the other man's house and table are yours for all time. His hospitality is not confined to an intimate few. It matters little who may be the recipient and the friend of a friend is as welcome as a friend himself. Such friendship is devoid of guile, free of the critical sophistication which seems never quite forgotten in our western conversation and social intercourse. It is lamentable that many Englishmen miss this exuberance of good will through lack of either receiving or making opportunities. Such qualities attach to all Indians whether friend or foe. The fact of political hostility should not prevent us from recognizing that the Indian nationalist who glares sullen hostility at an Englishman—which is returned with interest—is certainly a most loyal friend within his own circle and an excellent husband and father to his family.

Perhaps I can best illustrate the faculty of happy friendship with a brief picture of conditions at the Headquarters of a District where the social life of the small Indian community centres round the Deputy Commissioner. This gentleman should and can be a king in his own

<sup>1</sup> There is no equivalent to the Viceroy's Commissioned Officer in the British service. The Warrant Officer is nearest to his status. Many V.C.O.s have received promotion to the King's Commission in the present war.

domain. If he is a man of real personality there is no limit to the influence for good which he will exert upon his administrative officers and the people of his District. He will tour extensively and wherever he pitches camp the people will gather round and local differences will be smoothed out with good-will and humour on all sides.

At home his influence, and that of his wife if out of purdah, will be exercised over a small circle which can realize a high state of social contentment and can radiate the sense of its own happy condition to the District outside. Such is the opportunity of a Deputy Commissioner. His companions at Headquarters will be a Superintendent of Police, a District Sessions Judge, a Health Officer, a Civil Surgeon, an Executive Engineer, the staff of a Government High School, a Public Prosecutor and a few pleaders. To these may be added a Land Settlement Officer, agricultural experts, a forest officer and the staff of a mission school or hospital. There will also be the Deputy Commissioner's own staff, the Revenue Assistant and others. Life centres round the local club with tennis in the afternoon and bridge in the evening. The entire community forgothar and gossip, and parish politics are exchanged always in a composite language of Urdu and English in equal ingredients!

Often where a District lies outside the current of modern influence there is a separate ladies' club, discreetly enclosed by a high wall. But if the Deputy Commissioner's wife is a lady of any experience, the wives of the community live as freely as anywhere in the world; and incidentally their bridge is always beyond reproach. Listening to the ladies I have often smiled at the recognition of the eternal sisterhood of the Colonel's lady and Judy O'Grady and the wisdom of Kipling; for the conversation inevitably turns to saris and jewellery and the new jobs waiting round the corner for their husbands.

Whenever anyone joined or left the District the usual tea-party was always staged, ending in speeches, poetry and garlands. The latter are graded in size according to the status of the recipient; the guest of honour generally finishes smothered under a weight of gold tinsel and *champak* flowers. I confess these functions used to irritate me. One overeats and frequently the chief guest is a gentleman against whom one has heard free criticism a short time previously from most of his hosts! But tradition demands that the convention be observed and for me it was often a good opportunity from a professional point of view to sort out names and faces and register personal impressions. In the evening one or other of the circle throws his house open to the others, and everybody drifts in for drinks and an enormous meal followed by bridge and more gossip. The time factor plays little part in the social routine and guests come and go at their pleasure. It may not sound a very inspiring sort of life but it has the merit of being without sophistication. One felt there was genuine enjoyment even though the method of its expression was not very deep.

Sometimes the Deputy Commissioner is not socially inclined and the mantle of leadership falls on someone else. In Hissar in the Eastern Punjab I always stayed with a Mr. and Mrs. Nanda in their very

comfortable house inside the old fort. My host was the manager of the enormous Government cattle farm<sup>1</sup> and I think I am right in saying that at one time he was a world table tennis champion. The Deputy Commissioner's wife though out of purdah was not yet quite at home in public and Mrs. Nanda readily took on the task of entertaining Hissar. I used to marvel at the manner in which from eight o'clock onwards in the evening the official world and their wives would drift in to dinner without any apparent previous planning by either guests or hostess. Dinner would have satisfied any gourmet in the world, for both European and Indian dishes were served with that extra touch which always leaves some of us vaguely and surreptitiously wondering about the host's purse!

In the great advance to a freer and more rational life made by these men and women and all whom they represent the war has played its part. Many families had sons or brothers away and stories of a brave new life were coming in from the Arakan or the Middle East or from far-away Italy by every mail. Work parties were bringing a sense of social service and were breaking down purdah. The National War Front Organizations, often in the hands of the local pleaders, were uniting the community in a consciousness of their part both as members of a vast Commonwealth and as citizens of India. These things were happening in an era when actual contact with English men and women was rare. The occasional visits of the Commissioner or an important inspector or a recruiting officer served as symbols of a partner who, though distant in space and becoming less frequent in contact, was nevertheless still grateful for friendship and loyalty to the partnership.

What was the truth? Was it not that these people had absorbed for better or worse the British method into their system? The seed, be it good or bad, had taken root and the grain now harvested was coming back into the common pool. In such society men would often speculate with concern over the future. Without any very definite political convictions or constitutional analysis there was just a very simple background of fear of the severance of the British connection. We would frequently discuss politics. But unless, as sometimes happened, the Deputy Commissioner had himself any definite political bias, discussion was rational and argument was in those circumstances both pleasant and informative. Sometimes they would criticize English men and methods but they always expressed their views with tact and good manners and with much of their criticism I not infrequently agreed.

Inherent courtesy is again an Indian asset of national application. On the only occasion on which I had a slight disagreement with the late Sir Chhotu Ram he told me that no Indian ever expressed his real feelings to an Englishman. We thrashed the matter out and I subsequently came to know and respect him as an Indian gentleman of quite outstanding leadership. But for some time the matter worried me for it put a new interpretation on what I had always regarded as the courtesy and toleration of my Indian friends in argument. I am however certain

<sup>1</sup> The Hissar cattle are famous for draught purposes in contrast to the smaller Sindhi cattle whose cows yield excellent milk.

to-day of one thing; which is that political discussion between us was as mutually honest and unbiased as was humanly possible.

Much of the real pleasure of these occasional visits to the outlying Districts was in experiencing that sense of companionship and the family for which the Indian seems to have a genius. The Indian firmly believes that charity begins at home and second only to his sense of friendship is his sense of family obligation. This is both a quality of grace and a national handicap. Never did a mother more jealously guard the welfare and interests of her children than in the Hindu family circle from the highest to the very low. Indeed, with the noble ideal before them of Rama and Sita handed down in the greatest of epics, the Hindu family remains a model of domestic purity for the world outside to note. It is when domestic obligations are expanded to the joint family and a mother's love of her son is extended to possession of his mind and soul that degenerating influences creep in. Many a young man's adventurous spirit is destroyed in its infancy by the softening whispers of the Zenana. In seeking for officers for the King's Commission in the vital services such as the Indian Air Force or the fighting branches of the Army it was often a mother's influence which prevented a prospective candidate from presenting himself.

A question much in the minds of Englishmen genuinely out for enlightenment is doubt of the capacity of Indians to govern and administer. It is an enormous subject and I am not attempting to answer it. But I feel it is due to India to contribute something towards breaking down the misconception in some conservative quarters that, in general terms, administration in India will collapse if British responsibility is withdrawn. I have touched on the question more appropriately in the first half of this book. Here I only insist that the standard of pure ability, when divorced from extraneous attachments such as communal bias, is far above that for which India is generally given credit. There are hundreds of men perfectly capable of working the great machine. Here for example is a mixed bag, picked at random from the day-to-day life of India. The citation of qualifications is entirely my own!

Without hesitation we discover men of quiet impressive ability such as Sir Ramaswami Mudaliar; men of concentration of purpose and tenacity such as Dr. Ambedkar; masters of learning and philosophy such as Sir S. Radhakrishnan; astute and tolerant political leaders such as Mr. C. Rajagopalacharia, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru or Mr. V. S. Sastri; men with both political and administrative experience such as Sir Maharaj Singh; men of constructive imagination such as Sir Mirza Ismail<sup>1</sup>; men of clarity of thought and expression such as Sir Girja Shankar Bajpai; Congress reformers who are still tolerant of the existing Constitution such as Dr. Khan Sahib. The list is illimitable. No. There is no lack of talent. The machine will work. Direction at the top will be capable and conscientious. On the lower levels efficiency will generally suffer and this is recognized. Supervision may be lax. I have never felt very

<sup>1</sup> Sir Mirza Ismail is one of the few prominent Moslems not in the Congress who is also not interested in Pakistan.

sale in a French railway train or comfortable in a Baghdad hotel! India will not be the only country in which the standard of public service is not superlative. But India will be teaching herself and there are plenty of capable teachers, many of whom can hold their own in international competition.

It is curious that in a country of fierce religious antagonism it could still be said there were symptoms of a deep religious genius. Yet this is India's reputation and it is fully deserved. Tear away all the tinsel idolatry and superstition and ignorance and there is left a fundamental spiritual urge difficult to reconcile with the standard of education. I once attended a meeting of the little-known Radhaswami colony by the banks of the Beas river. The founder of the movement, which is in its first generation, is a Sikh who was a subordinate official in the Public Works Department. About 5,000 attended the meeting which was the normal monthly gathering to hear the address of their leader. The extraordinary feature of this vast congregation was that Sikhs, Hindus and Moslems were equally represented. It gave me furiously to think. It did indicate that perhaps if men and women could harness their loyalty to some alternative landmark they would welcome the opportunity to escape from the tyrannies of totalitarianism disguised as religion.

It is difficult to compress a survey of the sins and graces of 400 millions into a chapter. But if I am to generalize I can only say that in my experience of a limited area, bringing me into touch with doctors, station masters, post office officials, forest officers, and many other public servants, I found these men more often than not capable, selfless and conscientious. I single out this community because I believe them to be the most important in the land. Below them their clerks let them down and it is the junior subordinate, the babu in the booking office, who clogs the machine.

But look beyond the product of the eighth class of the High Schools to the bottom rung of the ladder. I spoke of excellence of character and mind in the lowest of the low. I suppose it is their very ignorance which gives to sweepers and *hamals* and *bhistis* and *massalchis* their loyalty and charm. Within her tiny domestic circle and with her limited primitive equipment the sweeper's wife runs a home as methodically and gracefully as any in the land. It is a sad reflection that the education which must come to rich and poor alike if India is to go forward will, by the capricious laws of mental evolution, probably destroy the quiet unsophistication of these patient people.

I sometimes used idly to wonder if in that vast continent a certain bearer I once had, who was with me through both arduous and leisurely times, was not the best man in the country, either British or Indian! He and all he represents are not very loud in their demands. Yet in their unobtrusive way they inspire hope, for the ingredients of the simple nobility of their make-up will be found in the great masses who mutely pursue the business of survival, unconscious of the richer life which should be theirs.

## CHAPTER XV

## THE BRITISH METHOD

IN WRITING OF THE BRITISH ACHIEVEMENT IT IS EASY ENOUGH TO INDULGE in heroics on the total length of the canals, the railways or the main roads; agencies which in themselves have fostered the conception of unity; or one could speak of hydro-electricity, agricultural experiment and stud bulls. There is ample satisfaction from reflections of justice truly administered and law and order preserved. We could boast too of the defeat of cholera and plague. All this however has been done many times before. Instead it is now fashionable to write down our work in India and play with the idea that our impositions have done more harm than good. My own view is that we can certainly regard our work as a landmark in human history without unnecessary trumpet-blowing. There have been sins of omission and the level of education may well be one of them.

Here however I propose to look at the British in India from another angle. It is the personal approach on which I am most competent to write. Instead of asking "What have we done or left undone?", I ask, "How have we behaved? Have we given sympathy? Have we received it? Are we socially liked or disliked, and why?" These are questions involving the human factor for any man to answer. They demand no specific knowledge. Almost every day for the past three years such reflections seemed thrust upon me.

I suppose a well-recognized national label which an Englishman carries about the world is his so-called British "reserve." I once sat in a military hospital waiting-room with two brother officers. We none of us had met before with the result that for a full hour not one word was uttered between us. A philosophy of mutual boredom may stand us in good stead when the blitz is on, but in India, of all countries, it can have the most devastating effect.

The term "reserve" hardly covers this insular attitude. It springs from a deeper consciousness in the Englishman that he is captain of his own affairs. He wishes neither to seek nor give advice. He desires emphatically to be left alone to do his own job in his own way; and at the end of the day, in normal times he likes an hour or so to himself when he can relax. He is brusque and does not suffer fools while the Indian is approachable and indulgent. He is always in a hurry and has little time for polite convention. In contrast an Indian is seldom in a hurry and the morning salutation, the reception of a guest or the departure of a friend are ceremonious matters, which to ignore is to shock the social conscience.

When an Englishman goes abroad he takes England and the English way of life with him, judging foreigners (which includes not only Indians but his brothers in the overseas Dominions) by their approximation in

general deportment to himself. He therefore likes those Indians whom he finds most English in their outlook and style of living. This attitude though not very imaginative commits no specific crime. One merely notes it as leaving British-Indian relations on a negative footing.

To some degree certain international rules of caste cut across national distinctions. Men who live in hills, farmers, soldiers or men of letters, will meet from opposite ends of the world and understand their own community in a manner which overcomes colour or continent or even language.

In general terms the few Englishmen who live in India represent two or three clearly defined types. There is the steady classical background of the Indian Civil Servant; there is the rather less responsible outlook of the officer of the Army seeking his sport and inconsequent fun, yet ready enough to look to the welfare and interest of the men he commands; and there are the drivers of hard bargains in the sphere of industry and commerce. There are, too, a few thousand British soldiers and since, regrettably, nobody bothers overmuch to interest them in their surroundings, they remain aloof with their thoughts on the football ground or way back in the towns of England and an understanding of India comes only to the very few with the initiative and opportunity to move outside the cantonment area.<sup>1</sup> On the only occasion on which I was able to take a party of British soldiers into a Punjab village the visit was a great success and I am certain the authorities would do well to encourage this kind of meeting. Of the other communities each finds common cause sooner or later with its Indian equivalent. The enormous central machine at Delhi seems to cast a spell over the Civil Service, so that collectively they become a clan unto themselves (and up to a point, quite rightly so). The man of sport often finds his way into a State where a rifle or a gun or the love of a horse guarantees him friendships which should last him his life, though they are hardly related to the problems of India; while in the industrial world the caste of wealth is socially self-sufficient.

My own experience of this queer international caste law was that in certain situations I felt more at ease with Indians of my own Civil Liaison staff than with some of my brother officers. Each occasion demands its own type of company. When, for instance, I was tramping across the fields with Captain Kala Singh, an old Sikh pensioner who was my most able assistant, I could certainly have wished for no better companion. I felt that one could walk with him through the fields of Lincolnshire, rediscovering landmarks of one's childhood and that over there he too would feel at home in that strong fellowship which a few fields of corn can give to men, no matter from what corner of the globe they may come. Thank God, then, at least for ways of life and thought which both communities can share, and the pity is that common interests are too few

<sup>1</sup> At the present time when many hundreds of thousands of European troops swell the normal Indian garrison this aspect is of great importance. Linked with a successful relationship between these men and the India which they contact is the matter of their own welfare. Whether by accident or design the recent visit of Lord Munster to inquire into welfare problems held a wider significance than that of the comfort of the British soldier.



while our numbers are small; and so, behind the barrier of reserve, many an English family misses opportunities for social exchange and real friendship. Yet things have definitely improved, and for one very obvious reason. The rapid Indianization of the services, both civil and military, has connoted that the two communities should work together in more intimate contact than ever before. For this the conditions of war have been largely responsible.

Sometimes I was extremely embittered by the utterly misleading effect of reading the Indian Press. To study the *Tribune* or the *Hindustan Times* or the *Sind Observer* one would think an unbridgeable gulf of hatred separated the two communities caused by an obstinate refusal by the British to grant political freedom. The Press had only one obsession, which was politics; and I used to marvel at the *Tribune's* faculty for reproducing the same theme day after day in different phrasology. Why could they not sometimes describe a local cricket match? Or if they must be confined to heavier business, why not work up a constructive campaign for a new land tenure system or champion the cleaning up of some of the provincial municipalities? While the Indian Press was busy daily with communal and racial politics, what were the actual social relations of Indian and British when they met?

Just as the brotherhood of arms in face of the enemy was forging fresh bonds of intimacy and affection, a reality which some Indians dislike to admit, so on the home front much misunderstanding was being removed and new contacts created which normally would never have borne fruit. Indian women, the wives of Army Officers, were taking their place in the small cantonment social circle. At work parties or charity meetings they were mixing freely with the English community. The social exclusiveness of the club had vanished. We met at sport or over the bridge table or at small parties. There was in fact just one community brought together by a common purpose and working in perfectly normal social harmony.

Even more pronounced was the spirit of comradeship in the public services of the big cities. The demands of A.R.P., the W.V.S., and other civic services threw the men and women of India and Britain together whether they liked it or not and many prejudices were buried in the process. "Political deadlock—quit India—Amery must go—freedom!" To all those concerned with the war sometimes the headlines sounded very far away.

Beyond the actual contacts which the war introduced it is to be admitted that the English community lacked any particular curiosity in regard to Indian affairs, whether political, historical or cultural. Husbands and wives would read their papers hurriedly over the breakfast table and political developments would be subjected to a few not very penetrating observations such as "Old Gandhi's at it again." In the war period people were preoccupied with other things. The news from Italy, France, the Arakan and England itself was of personal significance for so many.

But in the leisurely days of peace mental laziness becomes more prominent. There are too few of an inquisitive frame of mind; and in my own case I look back over many years of missed opportunities. English winter visitors are quick to notice this and comment disparagingly on the lack of enterprise of the permanent resident. But it is one thing to make your home in a distant land and quite another to visit that country on holiday with a set programme of sight-seeing and leisure for dilettante study, with introductory entries to all the Government houses in the country. One does not necessarily excuse the English housewife for judging India by her khansamah's daily account. But it is fair to point out that her whole attitude is negative and her sin, if any, is one of omission rather than intention. She and her husband, if he is in the British service,<sup>1</sup> continue to live the life they left behind in England. If, too, they have a little money that life can be very pleasant and the realities of India are conveniently unobtrusive and quietly slip by.

The English like all races suffer their normal percentage of fools; and a few of these sometimes do immense harm when let loose outside *their own shores*. We read of gross insults offered to respectable Indian citizens. I believe such cases now to be rare; but they do still occur and naturally receive more publicity than they deserve. Any Englishman normally sensitive for the good name of his country will on such occasions feel hot with shame. The man or woman from England lacking in all sense of ambassadorship will be of little use in India in the next ten years. We are a dwindling community. But for that reason the eyes of India are upon us. It is not an attractive topic, yet it needs to be remembered.

Sometimes mistakes are born of sheer ignorance such as a failure to discriminate between a coolie and a gentleman of culture. Dress is frequently deceptive. The first time I met the late Pandit Mehr Chand, Principal of the D.A.V. College at Jullundur, he was sitting cross-legged on an old string charpoy in a squalid little room shrouded in a blanket. His pugaree was loosely wrapped round his head and outside in the street I might well have taken him for a bazaar beggar. Yet here was a gentleman of learning and culture, a highly respected citizen who carried the responsibility of administering one of the most important educational institutions in the Punjab. Such deception seemed hardly fair!

Pride of appearance is on the whole one of the Englishman's foibles while in India it hardly features in the life of the community. I make no claims of right or wrong; for it is, I suppose, a philosophical issue. Indeed I myself am not sure of the answer. I state it merely to indicate the kind of mistake which an Englishman in ignorance will certainly make.

Yet another costly misunderstanding is a tendency to a vague mental generalization that because the bazaars are full of a poor, rather grubby humanity all Indians are therefore lacking in elementary hygiene. Such ignorance is still encountered among many who were hastened to India through the passing circumstances of war. To these it might be

<sup>1</sup> British units of the Army in India.

explained that if they ever had the experience of taking tea with an orthodox Brahman they would find that their host and hostess for reasons mainly based on hygiene drank milk from their own cups which would certainly never touch the lips of any guest.

When lecturing to young officers on British-Indian affairs I always pleaded that in all contact, whether in the bazaar or in a railway carriage or a drawing-room, they should assume the other man to be a perfectly normal human such as they consider themselves. I believe that to-day in comparison with the past this simple rule of social contact is generally observed. But in regard to ignorance something can and must be done in the future to eradicate its errors. The ignorant are only a handful of service officers and men and a few men in business in the big cities. You cannot legislate for awkward situations and the work for a better social understanding must be largely unofficial. But there are one or two practical measures which might prove of some effect, such as the reopening of language rewards to Englishwomen, the entertainment of Indian gentlemen by the Army, and the enlistment of Englishwomen into Indian welfare organizations. In normal times the wife of an officer in the Army drifts into a groove of monotony. Much of this is in the repetition of rather mediocre recreation and if officialdom could organize a few hours of the Englishwoman's life for her in something a bit more useful I believe probably she would welcome it.

Of the traditional arrogance the symptoms are now rare. In the past it has been responsible for breeding that inferiority complex in Indians which leads either to the latter seeking every opportunity to create a grievance or to their complete avoidance of the alien ruling caste. But if arrogance is now infrequent positive gestures of good will are equally rare. In the happy social relations I described above the path was made easy. The Indian families with whom we worked had sons and brothers at the war and the war drew us together. It is when the contact demands the initial move from an Englishman that he is obstinate. Inquisitiveness is so completely opposed to his code of social behaviour. Again, the occasions on which his opportunity will occur are not those of his day-to-day experience. They will crop up in railway carriages, in the small hotels, and in the streets, cafés and gardens of the big cities.

In a book<sup>1</sup> I read recently the author describes an episode which he must forgive me for reproducing; for though I know this kind of experience his story more completely illustrates the type of situation which I have in view. He tells of a morning walk he used to make daily from his hotel to some public gardens near by in Delhi. On the first morning he sat down on a seat under a tree at the other end of which was an Indian student deep in his books. The student glanced up and with that rather sullen inscrutable look which the young Indian can assume in an anti-pathetic environment collected his books and prepared to leave. The Englishman questioned his reason for leaving and the answer came hesitatingly and in excellent English: "I imagined that when you, an

<sup>1</sup> *East Again*. By Walter B. Harris, F.S.A. *The Times* correspondent in Tangier, 1887-1933.

Englishman, came to sit here you would want me to leave the seat." The Englishman replied that so far from this being the case he would be grateful for his companionship and that of his friends. There followed many days of friendly discussion under the trees when an old Englishman and two or three young Indian students covered the world and its affairs. They parted eventually without exchange of either names or addresses; yet for the students the study of Macaulay and Burke perhaps now assumed a fresh and happier significance. The story is short and simple. But its message is wide and has yet to be learnt, for not one Englishman in ten would have taken the initiative in a similar situation.

The same author rightly concludes that "racial hatred" in its literal sense does not exist. On the rare occasions when the hidden forces of revolution have broken loose and the knife and the bomb for a day or so have prevailed, it could be said that the white man was murdered for his colour alone. But it would be a complete and ridiculous misrepresentation to regard the isolated incident which occurs at intervals of years as in any way symptomatic of a general state of repressed hatred; and it represents criminal loose thinking on the part of either Indians or Englishmen if they allow speech or thought to be influenced by such crude Jingoism.

Mention has been made of the commercial community.<sup>1</sup> Here I have little experience. One travels in a train with a tough Calcutta jute merchant and his horizon seems limited to his factory output and the Calcutta race-course. He will discourse disparagingly but with convincing reason on the Indian commercial method. While he will play his part in public affairs in the big cities with stolid and consistent application he will never be very inquisitive about the teeming bazaar life close by; and at the end of his time his contribution is to have set a reasonably high standard of English business methods, which cannot fail to have a leavening effect on business enterprise throughout the country.

In Bombay social relations are on a far happier footing than in Calcutta. The pleasant Parsee community, with their ready charity, business acumen and, not the least, their graceful women, act as a focal point for social activity.

Perhaps the most tangible evidence of English insularity is the general reluctance to master any of the languages. I suppose about thirty Englishmen in the country could carry on a reasonable discussion in Urdu, for example, on the relative merits of fascism and democracy. The gentleman who boasted that he could get through the day on two sentences, "chota hazree" and "chota peg," is by no means a legendary figure. Yet there are thousands of Indians who both read and write English better than I do myself. We laugh at the babu who when asked to write an essay on a horse, opened with "The horse is a noble animal but when excited he will not do so." We are all too ready to

<sup>1</sup> The European commercial community totals about 12,000 of whom 7,000 have been called up under conscription. The balance carry the great burden and responsibility of British trade in India and their contribution, calling for many months of work at very high pressure, should not be overlooked.

forget our own limitations. Inability to speak the language, on many occasions, causes much petty friction and waste of time and four or five months with a munshi is but an insurance against a heap of worries over several years.

I was once able to arrange for some Englishwomen from a cantonment to visit some villages near by for welfare purposes. There was a particular question they put which I have always remembered. "Is it safe?" they asked. At first I thought they referred to cholera or smallpox until it dawned on me that they were thinking on more dramatic lines. It was a question that I frequently encountered with reference both to the country and the city bazaars. In the Punjab the question was of course meaningless. But apart from that, it indicated an entirely negative and impotent attitude. If we in India, who in the past had ruled and in the future are to advise, are going to sit down and ask if it is safe to go here or there, the sooner we are out of the country the better for all concerned.

Before I left India I spent a fortnight in a Poona hospital mixing up with officers from all over India and mostly from the British service. After 25 years of the East it was still the kind of experience which had not come my way. I listened to their talk on the country and its people whenever the topic came up and I kept my own counsel. Their views, the views of cursed ignorance, were summed up for me as we hung over the side of the ship and watched the Bombay silhouette fade on the horizon. All around me "the finest view in Asia" was their verdict. It made me sad because apart from the fact that that view represented something I knew and I was now sailing back to the unknown, I also was forced to reflect on the follies of a world in which we each move in watertight compartments of professional isolation, knowing little and therefore caring little when it concerns the world of our neighbour. Not to know is not to understand. If there the matter ended no harm would accrue. But not to understand is so often to condemn; and when a man condemns without understanding he leaves a vacuum of misunderstanding which someone at some time has all the more laboriously to break down. In the loose criticism of an individual or an art or a process a misconception can do little harm. But when we turn the levity of our hazy impressions on to a vast continent of 400 millions, it is then far better that we should, in ignorance, keep to a safe silence.

This is a very brief assessment of our present status. It is perhaps not realized that there are millions of Indians who have never even seen an Englishman and it would therefore be false to suppose that all over the continent there are millions of small social anxieties between the two races. In its true perspective the day-to-day social intercourse of Indians and the English is but a shadow of the greater constitutional problem with which only the few are in effect concerned, though the many are told that it is their business.

This is not entirely a happy conclusion. Yet there is certainly a friendly spirit abroad and we are not all judged as the personification of an English Gestapo. The daily affairs of life go on all over India, with

little thought or time for complex analysis of social relationship with the British; nor do we want Englishmen on their part to surrender themselves to a forced and artificial familiarity. All we ask is that the English, and more particularly those who will be taking up post-war careers in either business or the services, should remember that if they require or desire an Indian Dominion which is to be a *willing* partner in the British Commonwealth, then each man and woman has some individual responsibility in creating that willingness. I repeat there is no time or place for those who have not some dim conscience of ambassadorship.

## CHAPTER XVI

### CIVIL LIAISON

AT THE END OF 1940 IT WAS FELT THAT THE REASONS WHY WE HAD GONE to war were not understood in our most important recruiting areas and that recruiting was therefore not going as well as it should. Accordingly, an organization known as "Civil Liaison" was set up in the Punjab and the North-West Frontier Province.

There was a feeling at G.H.Q. that the great Sikh community was either out of touch with the needs of the war situation or that Government and the recruiting authorities were out of touch with the Sikhs. Certain incidents had occurred. In actual fact there was nothing whatsoever wrong with the Sikhs and I know many officers who would rather lead a Sikh unit into action than that of any other class. But the Sikh soldier needs attention backed by knowledge of his character and background; and when officers forget this there is sometimes trouble.

The task of the Civil Liaison organization was not confined to propaganda and the persuasion of the country-side to a greater war contribution. This indeed became the lesser part of our work, while the more important aspect was an undertaking to deal with the whole range of domestic complaints of the soldier's family when the soldier was on service. It could be summed up as the maintenance and stimulation of morale on the home front so that the men away had no need to be looking continually over their shoulders with news of trouble from home.

About four or five hundred petitions a month came through my office and another four hundred would at any given time be out in the country under investigation. This could be done either through a number of welfare officers who received a very small monthly allowance for their trouble to cover their travelling expenses or through the ordinary civil channels. Welfare workers were mostly Army pensioners, Indian officers or non-commissioned officers with fine service records. Some of these men did selfless and conscientious work but with only 170 workers to cover a parish of over 10,000 villages it was difficult to meet them all sufficiently often to judge their work accurately. So successful was the work of the organization in the North of India that it was later extended

to cover the United Provinces and the Bombay and Madras Presidencies.

The variety of complaints voiced in petitions was boundless. They covered the whole range of domestic village life, and in dealing with them the soul of the villages seemed laid bare in a manner that was perhaps not afforded the officers of the provincial Civil Service. Civil officers are of course regarded as all-powerful. An impartial and conscientious tehsildar is regarded as a minor deity by his flock. But too often the administration was an all-powerful agency to be feared, whose services were to be enlisted by fair means if possible, by indirect influence as a second alternative, and in the last resort by simple bribery. In these circumstances an independent agency such as an officer from the Army had the confidence of the people and received frank expressions of opinion denied to the civil officer in spite of his more intimate professional contact.

In going round the villages I never overcame my horror at the degrading standard of living. It was not only that the people lived in hovels with the drainage going openly into the village lane. But the villagers had no desire for anything better. The layout of a village is just a complete muddle and it never seems to be anyone's business to clear away anything outside the walls of private property. Men such as Colonel Brayne<sup>1</sup> have spent their lives trying to put over the ways of a better standard. For a year or so the enthusiasm of a few officers takes effect. But remove these missionaries and signs of organized better living evaporate into space. It is not so much a problem of teaching order and cleanliness to the village housewife. The meanest home is often spotlessly clean inside, with fresh *lapai* on the walls and pots and pans polished to shining reflection. Frequently those lower down the social scale set an example of domestic pride to their social superiors. It was when one turned to the village as a small compact society that all evidence of any sense of public responsibility was absent.

During these war years the Army has tackled this problem by intensive education of the sepoy in his spare time in a hundred different aspects of rural life; and when, as in the case of the Punjab, some 700,000 men return to the land the Army's contribution to better living is bound to be evident. Not only will the men have received actual instruction but many of them with memories of other lands will have witnessed the Western way of life and may demand better, cleaner homes. But the post-war impact of the demobilized soldier will be temporary and confined to the recruiting areas and in many parts of the country will be too weak to be of even initial effect.

What then is the remedy for active permanency? The problem is so often expressed as mainly economic. That is surely only half the answer. From my observation the years of war have illustrated that when, with high prices for cotton, wheat and sugar cane, the zemindar had his full era of profit, such profit was frittered away in useless wedding feasts and a few more pieces of jewellery for the women, simply because

<sup>1</sup> Colonel F. L. Brayne, C.S.I., C.I.E., M.C. For many years Deputy Commissioner Gurgaon where he gained a reputation for village welfare and reform work.

he had not the knowledge of how to apply his wealth. Higher incomes divorced from a spread of education will retard rather than assist progress. Economic and educational endeavour must go hand-in-hand.

The troubles we tried to smooth out for military families were many and varied. A great deal of the work was in connection with litigation. We always attempted first to effect a compromise but if that was unsuccessful we put the petitioner in touch with a public-spirited lawyer who gave his services free. As an Army officer I know nothing of civil or criminal law and I was lucky to have as an assistant at my elbow an Extra Assistant Commissioner, Rao Bahadur Ghasi Ram, lent by the Punjab Government to advise and assist me in the intricacies of the law and administration. This officer came of tough Hindu Jat stock. He was completely free of communal bias and his unfailing good humour and wide popularity with his brother officials made him just the right companion to see me through the technical side of my work.

Many petitions were, alas, only efforts to score off old enemies. Thus a mother would write to her son overseas with morbid exaggeration of the persecution she was receiving and with instructions to him to forward a petition to the Civil Liaison authorities. In due course the petition would arrive countersigned by the commanding officer. If the case looked important I would send the Rao Bahadur to investigate or go myself. On arrival one might find that the story was a complete fabrication and that, in any case, there was a perfectly capable elder brother at home to guard the family interests.

Cases were of every variety. Land encroachment by a neighbour, abduction of a wife the husband being on service, or wrangling between a wife and her mother-in-law as to who was the legal recipient of the monthly family allotment, were familiar cases. We saw that families received their monthly allotment from overseas regularly and that the village postmaster did not put two annas of the allotment into his pocket. We saw that they benefited from the many Government concessions to military families in regard to schools, dispensaries and various other matters.

The daily post of 40 or 50 letters usually yielded a crop of a dozen or so harassing stories of persecution. Sometimes it seemed as if the whole country-side was one vast cauldron of intrigue. It filled one with a sense of despair. Evidence of corruption would be answered by counter-corruption. Was there no one whom one could trust and were the strong always to exploit the weak? These were occasionally my reactions to a long day in the office. Eventually I realized that it was foolish to take the business of petitions too seriously. That life in the country-side was a mess of petty intrigue was clear. But I came to the conclusion that the people themselves were fundamentally not so sensitive as their melodramatic appeals would have one believe and in any case there was no time to get overwrought about these things.

At village meetings all troubles would be aired in open conference with the village grey-beards sitting round furnishing a flow of comment. There was, thank God, a give and take of much humour and one could



achieve decisions in domestic squabbles in a manner which was impossible through office channels. But the area I had to cover, from the Kangra valley in the north to Gurgaon south of Delhi, was so large that the great bulk of petition work had to be handed on from the office to the agencies lower down and the village meetings served more as a method of keeping in touch with the pulse and thought of the people.

Two particular grievances were the shortages of kerosene oil and sugar. As yet electric light has not reached the Punjab villages and when families could not get their kerosene oil it meant long hours of darkness and depression as the sun went down. Kerosene oil was distributed in the main towns only through the agents of the three big oil companies, Standard Oil, Burmah Shell and Caltex. A system of quota and control was meant to ensure that all received a little. But the poor Army housewife, who lived ten miles from a town, without small assistance was in a hopeless position. If she herself went to the kerosene depot on distribution day she invariably arrived late and was hustled out of her place in a long queue by a crowd of mannerless young men of the town who, of course, were on the spot as soon as the shop opened. The alternative, to send in a male representative the day before, involved a night's lodging in the town.

In the matter of sugar circumstances were different. The Punjab has to import most of its sugar and there are only three mills in the Province. It so happens that two of these are situated in the Jullundur area of Kapurthala State. Not so very long ago the villager pressed his own cane and ate the raw product known as "gur." But as new tastes developed and the quality and quantity of cane improved, so more cane went to the mills and the villagers became sugar-minded. In 1943 the Kapurthala mills<sup>1</sup> were offering the cane-growers a price for cane which gave the latter practically no working profit. In addition there was much malpractice in the weighing of cane as it was loaded at the local railway stations in transit to the mills. The remedy, of course, as Mr. McLeod, the Commissioner of the Jullundur Division, pointed out, was for the cane-growers to get together and, with Government assistance through the Co-operative Department, open up their own mill on their own territory. There was certainly enough cane in the area to support a third mill. At the time, however, the only effective action which the growers could take was to withhold their cane. There followed an abnormal situation when sugar was imported on a large scale from the United Provinces. In the western Punjab this was logical. In the area round the Jullundur and Ludhiana Districts it became a case of bringing coals to Newcastle. The price of sugar dropped, the cane-growers were unable to sell their surplus gur and for some time sugar, the refined article, was selling cheaper than gur, the raw material!

Eventually the mills came to terms and a fair price for cane was fixed. A complete reaction now set in. The mills were swamped with the cane which had been accumulating. For days bullock carts now

<sup>1</sup> The two mills (Phagwara and Hamira) were not State mills, but were privately owned with financial agreements with the State.

crowded the Grand Trunk Road for two or three miles outside the mill gates. The mills working to capacity could not deal with the volume of cane coming in. The carts were caught in the rain and cane arriving by rail could not be unloaded and heavy demurrage charges accumulated on the waiting wagons! It was one of those strange situations in which everybody lost all round and it typified the difficulties of the Indian food problem in the war, when some areas had abundance and others had perpetually to import.

Throughout this period the country folk clamoured for sugar. It should be remembered that rural India in the Punjab these days was practically synonymous with the soldier community. In any village one entered there was hardly a family without a son in one of the services<sup>1</sup> and since our task was to assist service families we were kept very busy with negotiations with the local civil authorities. In the case of sugar I had less sympathy with the service community than in their other difficulties. In times past they had eaten gur and when one read of the nation in England going short of tea, eggs, oranges and meat, one felt inclined to remind the people that there was a war on. Sepoys would appear on leave from their units with letters from their commanding officers demanding a maund<sup>2</sup> of sugar for a wedding!

We managed to achieve some sort of system of even distribution to military families; and in some Districts Deputy Commissioners handed over a quota to my welfare officers for sub-distribution. A Government ruling which gave a smaller quota *per capita* to the rural areas than to the towns was most vigorously opposed. The reason offered was that the people of the towns were habitual sugar-eaters while the habit was comparatively new to the villagers. Old Army pensioners, men of some influence and authority who live almost entirely in the rural areas, found themselves with a smaller allowance than the riff-raff of the bazaar.

It was in such matters that one saw the civil machinery of administration at close quarters. After years of the Army background I confess I was sometimes astonished at their ponderous methods and lack of co-ordination. In the Army we work to a simple code of a commander issuing an order and a subordinate obeying it. From the written orders received from above orders on the lower level are elaborated; and so in time the smallest cog knows not only its own articulation in the machine, but is also given sufficient information of the plan as a whole to ensure intelligent participation.

There appears to be nothing analogous to this in civil government. Instructions would arrive couched in polite but rather rambling language, suggesting the line of action to be taken. It appeared to me that everyone handed on the privilege of initiative to the man below and too much in regard to actual method was left to the discretion of a subordinate. The result was that no two Districts ever seemed to be working on the same lines. For me this was most confusing, and in suggesting ways and

<sup>1</sup> Families of the Royal Indian Navy and the Indian Air Force were equally our responsibility with those of the Indian Army.

<sup>2</sup> One maund is 80 lb.

means by which my community could be assisted I had each time first to master the local system of control.

Again I was surprised to find that the manner by which in the Army a commander will summon his subordinates to a conference before the issue of orders was very seldom adopted by civil officers. On such occasions a General hears practical difficulties and can readjust his plans accordingly. Those who take his orders know his mind and can therefore act intelligently when things go wrong. Later, in the experience of a Resettlement Officer working in close touch with the Government of the North-West Frontier Province, the departmental segregation was lamentable. An Under-Secretary in one Department would write to his corresponding official in another Department asking for clarification on some point which could have been cleared up in five minutes by bothering to walk a hundred yards to the other man's office. The simple clarity of the Army method was missing. Individually good men worked wonders. But there was not nearly a close enough check on the lazy official.

My work brought me into close touch with eleven Deputy Commissioners,<sup>1</sup> and throughout my time seven or eight of these were Indians. I found myself frequently registering vague mental comparisons and at the end I had come to little conclusion. At the top of the scale was an English Deputy Commissioner who gave every ounce of his mental and physical powers to the service of his District. Equally impressive was a Moslem who from my point of view was the easiest and most charming of co-operators. He was also a man of decision when the occasion demanded and I shall watch his career with interest.

At the other end of the list was an Englishman who so loved the sound of his own voice that it took him a quarter of an hour of verbal appreciation to give a ruling on a point which could be settled in one minute. Even then the argument was so cloaked in obscure high-sounding metaphor that his decision was difficult to recognize. With him I would couple another Moslem Deputy Commissioner in a Hindu District who lived in an obsession of communal intrigue. He revelled in inventing fantastic party squabbles and non-existent factional groups. Eventually he worked himself into such a state that he asked for an armed guard for personal protection! And all the time his own District Staff and officials were just quietly laughing at him. I recall that once, expanding to me in self-pity, he told me that he was working on his files until twelve o'clock every night. I happened to know that he never got to his office until twelve o'clock in the day! It must be appreciated that an Indian Deputy Commissioner takes office in the certainty that before his arrival communal bias will have been attributed to him. The Englishman

<sup>1</sup> *Jullundur Division.*  
Jullundur District.  
Hoshiarpur District.  
Ludhiana District.  
Ferozepore District.  
Kangra District.

*Ambala Division.*  
Ambala District.  
Karnal District.  
Hissar District.  
Rohtak District.  
Gurgaon District.

*Delhi Province.*  
Delhi District.

starts under no such handicap. The Indian who can negotiate the extra fence will always be well up in the race.

I am glad to think that conclusions on the merits of Deputy Commissioners were obscure. There is little satisfaction in any definite conviction of superior racial capacity, particularly when the administration is passing to the pick of the Indian class-rooms. Before leaving the subject a chance opinion of a certain solidly efficient Indian Deputy Commissioner deserves record. It was just this: that in speaking of democracy as applied to India he termed it as the most ridiculous experiment that could ever be conceived! It seemed strange to hear from an Indian words which might have come more appropriately from a die-hard British Tory.

The protection of the undefended soldier's wife from every form of local persecution became a big problem; so much so that we sought for special legislation. I discussed ways and means with four lawyers in my area. At one time it seemed that the solution lay in the Deputy Commissioner being authorized to delegate special powers to subordinates to deal with cases on the spot. The difficulty lay in the fact that most of the alleged offences were not cognizable by the police. The evidence might be clear and obvious and the public would confirm definitely that an offence had been committed. But the only remedy for a woman in such a situation was to "file a civil suit." Those who know the conditions of rural India will realize a woman's hopeless position. The nearest Court might be fifteen miles away. There would be the constant expense of a tonga and the usual purdah difficulties at the Court. Finally she would have to wade through a quagmire of bribery and counter-bribery of witnesses. The very shortest period of settlement would be a year and many such cases took two years with the probability of the eventual verdict going against the plaintiff.

Suggestions for a special Ordinance or an addition to the Defence of India Rules were mooted. But all efforts at corrective legislation broke down on technical points and one came to the conclusion that the most practical assistance was the personality of the tehsildar coupled with that quite unofficial process known as "pressure to bear"! Realizing the particular difficulties of women it was decided, not without considerable misgivings from conservative Indian thought, to open up an entirely new branch of our activities in the introduction of woman welfare workers.<sup>1</sup> The Defence Department who had to find the money were very cautious. Such an experiment was of course impossible in many areas such as the Frontier Province.

The Jullundur and Ambala Divisions were chosen to launch the scheme and my predecessor had already appointed 500 workers when I took over. The women were nearly all wives of serving soldiers or pensioners and the difficulty lay in sorting out those who were pulling their weight from those who were passengers. 80 per cent of them were illiterate. This in itself was not necessarily a disqualification for

<sup>1</sup> Sevadarnis. See Glossary.

many tough old ladies who had never put pen to paper, by their virile character and common sense, were more valuable workers than some of their sophisticated younger sisters. We gave them written instructions in Urdu and hoped that, with the help of someone who could read, they would get around and visit the other women in the village and help them in their difficulties. If they carried out their orders conscientiously they would certainly be kept busy. The authorities having given them an initial present of five rupees and a decorative appointment card expected them to carry on with the enthusiasm of missionaries in an honorary capacity. This was expecting too much and the Defence Department later gave us sufficient funds to put them on a basis of monthly allowances.

Normally an unprotected woman seldom moves outside her own village and our first task was to try and break down this limitation. It was quite impossible for me to meet and judge the worth of 500 women scattered over an area of 30,000 square miles and I suggested sanction for the appointment of District Inspectresses to help me out. This was granted and the whole organization was put on an active foundation with potential social repercussions far beyond its limited war-time role.

Good inspectresses were not easy to find; but eventually we collected a team of women of whose work and devotion to duty I cannot speak too highly. Sometimes indeed they took their work with a conscientious attack which defeated its own object; and the wife of the Bengali headmaster of the Jat Heroes' School at Rohtak was so overwrought by the minor tragedies of some of her cases that I had to beg her to be a little less sympathetic and a little more practical!

Inspectresses were gradually able to weed out the more ineffectual workers from their charges and appoint fresh ones in their place. Before I left we staged a meeting and with Army transport placed at our disposal we collected 250 woman welfare workers from many miles around. With the assistance of an old friend of mine, Lt.-Colonel Mohammed Akbar Khan,<sup>1</sup> who turned his own men out of their lines, we housed and fed the rather bewildered army for two days and nights, plying them with lectures and evening cinema shows and a final address from Begum Shah Nawaz<sup>2</sup> which fairly swept them off their feet.

For those two days my inspectresses were magnificent. They bumped across the country in Army trucks to collect their flocks, brought them in, shepherded them into their barracks and saw to their meals with all the confidence and control of British Sergeant-Majors.

In choosing these ladies no particular method was adopted and whenever I happened to meet a likely candidate I put the suggestion of appointment to her. One inspectress was an American Medical Missionary who had worked for many years with her husband in the

<sup>1</sup> This officer was then commanding a large Transport training unit. He will be remembered in England for his effective broadcasts in 1940 and 1941 for the B.B.C.

<sup>2</sup> Daughter of the late Sir Muhammad Shafi. Recently member of an Empire Parliamentary delegation. Member of the Punjab Assembly.

Ferozepore District. She spoke perfect Punjabi and was both capable and sympathetic. We had eventually to lose her services owing to a ridiculous piece of red tape interference involving the legality of her accepting service in an Indian Army welfare organization as an American citizen! In choosing others I knew that, the Punjab being still a land of feudal tendencies, women of respected families would more probably be successful than obscure but no less worthy candidates.

In Jullundur Begum Wazir Ali, a niece of the late Sir Sikandar Hayat Khan married to a local pleader, took on the work. She was an elderly woman at that stage when purdah becomes a loose convention for adoption in the noisy world outside the garden wall. She wore the heavy burka which makes a woman look like a member of a secret crime society and must be a misery of suffocation in the hot weather. She was a little old-fashioned and spoke no English; but she knew all her welfare workers and went about her work with a serious deliberation. Another inspec-tress, Begum Ghazanfar Ali, wife of a Ludhiana lawyer who had put in a prodigious amount of quiet war work, was a lady of sparkling gaiety. *She too had to humour the purdah handicap though I shall be surprised if she hasn't thrown it aside within the next few years.* Yet another, Mrs. Gurbachan Singh, was the wife of a Sikh officer with the King's Commission. She was highly educated; and as I watched her keen, quiet efficiency I felt I could have found no more loyal or capable subordinate from among any of the male members of the organization. She had a happy way of slipping into the office once a week with a note-book and putting a dozen or so extremely pertinent questions. Then with a sudden shy smile she would be away and I knew she was off 20 miles into the country to get on with her job. For her of course there was no thought of purdah. She was quick and modern and her frank clear-cut features betokened all that is best in the new generation of free Indian womanhood. I ask for patience in giving these few names so much attention in a book covering many matters. But co-operation and friendship seemed to come so suddenly and from such unexpected quarters that it left a very deep impression on my mind.

I could not conclude a reference to this side of our work without recording my memory of that remarkable lady, Begum Shah Nawaz, when addressing a small but arrestingly impressive audience of simple village wives whose poor dulled intellects, for the first time in their lives, received as a sudden ray in the dark some dim conception of a new era for the women of India. Speaking to them in their own Punjabi she told them of the world outside, of the war and their part in it, and of the passing of the old order of life behind the latticed window. She spoke too of the homes they must make for the men who would return and of the encouragement they should give those men in their task of keeping a bestial enemy out of India. At the end an audience of women, normally shy and timid, almost overwhelmed her, and with any encouragement would have attacked the nearest recruiting officer and demanded to be led as Amazons against the Japanese!

I have said enough to indicate that our work in Civil Liaison amounted to a continual review of life on the home front. The village meeting would begin in petition investigation and end in a few speeches, relieved by anything in the nature of conjuring or dancing which could be locally produced. We had some quite modern ideas on the psychology of propaganda and there was never any shortage of oratory. The National War Front organization usually lent us a few speakers and a personal friend of mine, Pandit Chuni Lal, a Brahman lawyer, could always be counted on for a contribution. Apart from these the local poet<sup>1</sup> would insist on letting off steam and there was sometimes an Indian officer on leave from overseas who would want to tell of his war experiences. This always ended in a lengthy declamation on his complete life history! By far the most reliable orator was my own assistant, the Rao Bahadur, who put himself through a regular home-made course, even going to the lengths of study in front of a mirror! I myself, though I had taken an Urdu Interpretership, knew only a few words of Punjabi, and it was the latter language which was usually most appropriate.

The variety of the work put one into close touch not only with the Administration but also with the public services, irrigation officials, the railways and the post and telegraph service. Here again there were constant surprises. Station-masters and postmasters, working sometimes with the most indifferent and corrupt staffs, would prove themselves to be men of great devotion to duty and public spirit. With a general demand for more and more clerks in the public services and Government Departments, a responsible official such as a station-master had an uphill task. The opportunities of a corrupt railway clerk are endless and when in addition he is lazy and not too literate the task of a conscientious station-master becomes impossible. I have a soft place for station-masters for one of them once held up the Frontier Mail for me five minutes, a most reprehensible affair in which we must both plead guilty. But there were extenuating circumstances and it was at least very early in the morning with the passengers all fast asleep!

One could ramble on over many experiences but they would hardly be of value for an inquisitive reader. In conclusion I recall the old lady who demanded leave home for her son on the premise that if the soldiers did not get leave soon there would be no means of breeding the Army of the future! I recall many laughs over the daily post from the gentleman who started with "On the whole my family is devoted to the Crown" to one of my own assistants who, in a farewell letter, referred to me as an "angle of mercy": shades of Walt Disney's *Fantasia*!

I trust that the Civil Liaison work will not vanish with the war. There is certainly ample scope for it. Something must also be done to dispel the ignorance of the Army officer in all affairs pertaining to the Civil Administration. But that is another matter. Apart from this,

<sup>1</sup> Poetry in certain areas amounts to a profession. The poet will invariably recite his own composition. Unlike Indian music Punjabi poetry observes simple laws of constant rhyme and rhythm, and the achievements of local poets are remarkable, particularly in the manner in which they will produce overnight a poem to meet a particular occasion, the poem often being recited by heart.

there is the feeling that the work, if properly staffed, can be turned into channels of social service with benefit to the community as a whole, in those areas which have come to be recognized as producing the basic strength of the Indian Defence Services.

Perhaps there was, after all, logic in the petition which arrived for me one morning addressed:—

“To the Civilization Officer.”

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE INDIAN SOLDIERS' BOARD

APART FROM MUCH PERSONAL CONTACT WITH DEPUTY COMMISSIONERS which was so necessary in connection with the troubles of soldiers' families, I met them more formally at the quarterly meetings of institutions known as the *District Soldiers' Boards*.<sup>1</sup> There was one of these in each District, the Deputy Commissioner in each case being its President while I was the Vice-President.

From the beginning I felt that much more use could be made of the Boards. They took their orders from a rather vague control called “The Provincial Soldiers' Board.” These in turn received instructions from a lofty and still more nebulous centre known as the “Indian Soldiers' Board.” All correspondence from the central control was signed by a Secretary whom none of us had ever seen. In the Provinces a Government Secretary, either the Chief Secretary or the Home Secretary, was in charge and issued instructions in the name of the Provincial Board to the Districts. In my experience the Provincial Board Secretary never entered one of my eleven District Soldiers' Boards over a period of two and a half years. The difficulty lay in the fact that the organization was not official. It existed on the support of certain Service Benevolent Funds, legacies of the last war, and the interest from these funds both financed the Boards and gave small relief to certain deserving pension cases not covered by the normal pension rules. The Boards studied applications, made recommendations and were responsible for benevolent fund disbursements.

Apart from this, until the outbreak of war in 1939, they had few other functions. There was no recognized constitution and generally Boards composed themselves according to their inclination, assembling for the purpose some 30 or 40 old pensioners from the District for a gossip at the quarterly meetings. I felt that somehow a great opportunity was being lost. Times were difficult and with many pensioners recalled to the Army good secretaries of the right age for Boards were difficult to come by.

<sup>1</sup> Since renamed under the ponderous title of the “District Sailors', Soldiers' and Airmen's Boards.”



At the same time a vast amount of work was now coming to the Boards quite outside their normal peace activities. Welfare workers of the Civil Liaison were also members of the Boards and we were using the latter for much petition investigation. There were also many official orders pouring in about correspondence with prisoners of war, arrest of deserters, recruiting, family allotment money orders, etc., which had to be given much publicity in the country-side, and in conjunction with our own organization the District Soldiers' Board was the obvious medium for handing on information.

It seemed that there was far too little interest being taken in the Boards not only by the Defence Department and the Government of India but also by the service community whom they were intended to benefit. Personally I would have advocated that for the duration of the war the Boards should be taken over by the Adjutant-General's Branch of G.H.Q. The argument against this was that they were intended to be democratic institutions under the Deputy Commissioners and that they should learn to conduct their own business. Such reasoning would have been more impressive if Deputy Commissioners had had the interest or time to give their Boards the attention they merited. But the Civil Administration was already overburdened with a load of war problems such as supply, food control and an accumulation of cases in the courts and the Boards were inevitably much left to themselves. Some Boards with which I worked, notably those at Jullundur and Flissar, with keen energetic staffs overcame these difficulties. But many were sleepy, dilatory affairs, housed in hovels, with no idea of tackling the work coming in, let alone on expanding their responsibilities. If the Army could take over the Boards we could at least set them on their feet. Later, when firmly established on efficient lines, most certainly they should revert to independence, by which time they would have become fit institutions to assume their post-war responsibilities.

I submitted suggestions on these lines but they were not approved. Nevertheless our Civil Liaison organization was able to do much to put new life into the Boards. By continually bullying the Indian Soldiers' Board, the Defence Department and the Civil Administration, the Chief Civil Liaison officer in Northern India procured money, better accommodation and increased staffs.

As a starting-point it seemed to me essential that Boards should have a defined constitution. There was, for instance, no clear idea as to a definition of membership! Some regarded all pensioners in their district as members,<sup>1</sup> while others had a limited membership up to 100 nominated by the Deputy Commissioner. No suggestion of an elective system had ever been mooted. I accordingly drew up a constitution which was placed as a test case before the Jullundur Board: and here I had a most illuminating experience.

A committee of five pensioned Indian officers with two of my own staff and an Extra Assistant Commissioner from the Deputy Com-

<sup>1</sup> The future membership of a D.S.B. such as Rawalpindi after the war, in these conditions, might number forty thousand.

missioner's office was appointed to sit with me and consider the proposals. The minor points, such as rules to govern the appointment of committees, honorary membership and such items, were quickly settled. It was when we came to the definition of "ordinary membership" that an interesting development arose. I hoped to establish that all pensioners should be ordinary members and that they should elect working members on a scale of one working member for each Zail<sup>1</sup> in the District. This would give a Board between 50 and 80 working members and these would be the men to attend Board meetings and conduct its affairs. In introducing the suggestion of an election I was raising an entirely new issue. My object was only to stimulate interest in the whole organization. It was of course going far beyond the accepted official conception of the needs of a democratic institution. Yet if a public body is to be truly democratic, how can an elective system possibly be avoided? I could well have forced my view on the Committee; but it was particularly desirable for the decision to be theirs. I put the arguments to them and asked them to think it over for a week and then let me have their decisions in writing. We broke up with murmurings of doubt and suspicion.

It should be realized that the Committee members were all respected intelligent Indian officers of social standing. They had fine records of service and were typical of the best elements of the rural Punjab. Later the answers arrived. Two were definitely opposed to election. One expressed a neutral opinion of no value, while two accepted it with no marked symptoms of enthusiasm. I was disappointed. The reason for opposition amounted to the assumption that no elections could be run on honest lines and that to be elected a working member would have to be prepared to part with a nice little sum of money from his own pocket. Municipal and District Board election cases were quoted to me as examples. I was assured that a friend of mine, the President of the local District Board, had had to part with 30,000 rupees as the price of his election!

I had hoped that soldiers, with their independent background and mistrust of politics, would take the view that they themselves were the one community which could work an election on an honest basis of an appreciation of character as opposed to lip-service and that therefore the best men would come to the Boards for the better interest of the soldier community. I do not know the outcome of it all, for soon after I left the Civil Liaison organization for Resettlement work.

I believe that from among the ranks of the new post-war pensioners there will be many men ready to adopt new methods. The older generation with whom I was dealing had been too long in their sleepy village environment. They were simple and worthy devotees of the British connection, commanding respect and real affection. I have heard their officers describe them as "the salt of the earth." But the modern world was slipping by them!

I suppose at the back of my mind was a vague conception that the Indian Soldiers' Board organization could have a great part to play in

<sup>1</sup> A Zail covers about thirty villages.

the future of India where the soldier, except for the fact that he votes if within the ordinary franchise terms, has no political expression whatsoever. In regard to the serving soldier it could not possibly be otherwise. But it is surely reasonable to contemplate some adjustment in consideration of those million or more men who will be back in their homes after the war.

It seemed as if there might emerge a wonderful opportunity to lay the foundations almost of a national character more rugged and less ephemeral than that which to-day pervades the continent. It would be folly to set up a party in opposition to elements of government which were already sound, for this would create antagonisms which would only destroy what we wish to create. For this reason my great friend Sir Sher Mohammed Khan,<sup>1</sup> a champion of the soldier's cause, needs to go warily if his desire is to create an Army party. We may take the Punjab as an example. Suppose then that candidates of such a party were to capture the soldier's vote to such an extent that they defeated Unionist candidates at the polls, the result would be an unnecessary division of strength to the detriment of the ideals of unity for which both the Unionists and the soldiers must stand.

But if an organization could take shape by which the pensioner's vote was either directed into the right channels or Army candidates with the soldier's vote behind them were accepted by the Unionist party as members of that party, then an accretion rather than a division of strength would follow. One recalls that Earl Haig in building up the British Legion was emphatic that his great organization of ex-service men was to be divorced from all political influence and that as an Empire association its ideals were those of a vast brotherhood of selfless service for the moral strengthening of the Empire. Such a noble conception took its inevitable shape in England. But in India conditions are very different and we have to build rather than accommodate.

It is no part of these suggestions to create a Junker party on the Prussian model for the privileged domination of the nation. That has never yet succeeded and the soldier at home is only a citizen among his brother citizens. But as a citizen he should be able to bring his own particular contribution into the common pool for the general benefit of society. That contribution could be very real. Among those Indians who have fought for their country are many of high rank who have led units in the field and held staff appointments of great responsibility. They include naval officers who have sailed in distant seas and officers of the air force who have absorbed the freedom of the air. Such men will have a happy breadth of vision as compared with those they left behind. Could these men, if given the lead, not contribute something clean, disciplined and strong to the hysterical political methods of to-day? And indeed discipline, to permeate every activity in the land, is the country's crying need.<sup>2</sup> If men who have learnt the brotherhood of

<sup>1</sup> Head of the Moslem clan of Gakhars. After a G.H.Q. appointment, commanded a battalion in Iraq (1942-44), for the recruitment of which he was mainly responsible.

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter IX, page 114.

arms could carry its lesson into the social and political life of India sweeping aside the whole communal edifice, if further they could gain a footing in the higher administration of the country, there would indeed be a new era to contemplate in the difficult post-war years.

My reasoning was but a hope that men of fresh vigour and enterprise, with standards of better living, hygiene, discipline, method and leadership, should come forward to assist boldly in the management of the country. And how could this be better achieved than that they should stand for elections in the Councils and Assemblies? Will they do this without some form of machinery to encourage them?

It is only fair and natural that they should receive initial leadership and official encouragement if such men are to launch effectively into public service. God certainly helps those who help themselves. But there is a danger that good men from the Defence Services will not receive an equal start with those who are already accustomed to the course and it is our simple duty to see that they are not thus handicapped. Such were my distant thoughts when looking ahead to the future of the Indian Soldiers' Board organization.

But if Boards are to be denied the more ambitious scope of such surmise there is yet a very real part for them to play in assisting thousands of ex-service men in the intricacies of settlement into civil life; and in this capacity they will need both official blessing and practical assistance. We look to the Government of India to see that they are not forgotten.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### A CONTINENT AT WAR

THE SHARE OF THE PEOPLE OF INDIA IN THE WAR HAS BEEN THE SUBJECT of much controversy and there should therefore be a place for a fair assessment of her position from one who had the opportunity to see something of both the military and civil background during the years 1939 to 1944. I should again emphasize the fact that the impressions I then registered, which are here recorded, are personal and do not in any way carry official sanction.

On the one hand there was the charge that the Indian people were committed to the war without their consultation, that the Army was mercenary and that we waged war for imperialistic ends. The latter charge faded out with the liquidation of Congress activities in 1942. On the other hand there was the assertion that the Indian Army of two millions was the largest voluntary army in the world. There was the stirring call to arms of the late Premier of the Punjab, Sir Sikander Hayat Khan, and the certainty that, if we had not the co-operation of 100 per cent of the people, at least we had secured the unqualified support of those classes which had for many years been the source of our manpower in the Army.

Somewhere between these two reactions lay the truth. It would be foolish to argue that the people of the continent, as one man, felt that to fight the war to final victory was the cause above all others which invited their daily labour and sacrifice—indeed I was frequently left with the sense that we were supporting a vast artificial situation. It was when moving among those very men who had been termed “mercenaries” and in the society of their families that I felt a real and more enduring sympathy with the cause for which we were fighting.

It is therefore fair to say that generally there was interest and in many areas there was enthusiasm, while perhaps only in the bazaars of the larger cities there was indifference except to spectacular rumours. To appreciate the true position it should be recognized that the whole outlook on the war had no parallel in either England or the Dominions. In spite of the threat to the eastern frontier, in vast areas there was an apathetic sense of security. It was an Indian Colonel on the staff who suggested to me that the best tonic India could have had would have been a Japanese landing on her east coast! While at times I would be astonished at the spontaneous enthusiasm of Indian organizers in the A.R.P. services or the National War Front, on other occasions, particularly when reading Indian newspapers, I would be disgusted at the apathy to the great events stirring the world and the pettiness which limited intelligent Indian thought to the passing satisfaction of criticizing British administration in India and British war prosecution abroad.

From the beginning the only possible and practical method of securing the very large measure of co-operation which we did was by diplomacy. The Government method was one of continual appeal, which while it undoubtedly held a moral persuasion had also to support its lofty inducement by the opportunity for material profit. Government control of industry or man-power was out of the question and the resources of private enterprise had to be sought and paid for.

My work during these years frequently took me to Lahore, the capital of a Province with a greater stake in the war than that of any other in India. Everywhere there was evidence of a vast accumulation of wealth. The manager of the Imperial Bank of India told me that private deposits had doubled and he was daily opening new accounts. Sir Alan Lloyd, the Government controller of new industrial enterprises, said that applications to launch new companies were pouring in. Mushroom factories of all sorts were springing up along the Grand Trunk Road between Amritsar and Lahore. The cafés and dance halls of Lahore were full of young Indians with fresh money to spend. In Delhi City the receipts from Income Tax rose from 26 lacs in 1939 to four crores in 1944.

Frequently in Lahore I enjoyed the proverbial hospitality of Mr. Devi Chand who owned a big milliner's concern with branches in the main towns in Northern India. At his house I encountered the commercial community and it was obvious that the war had hardly touched this thriving society. While they were perturbed and affected materially by restrictions to normal trade, their mental attitude was that of a man detached who watches a situation of opportunity. Politically their only

concern was with the facilities for trade which they trusted Britain would offer them after the war. If the new dispensation in any way hindered trade with Britain, then they would reluctantly have to seek markets elsewhere. Some of these gentlemen in their commercial dealings had travelled widely on the European continent and they fretted at war conditions and ordinances which laid down import quotas, retail prices and profit margins. They were friendly, hospitable people; but neither the deeper significance of the war nor a national political conscience worried them. They lived their own rather soft, happy lives absorbed in the eternal competition of all trade, with time enough at the end of the day for entertainment.

Many were involved in Government contract work. All over the country the casual observer had the impression that contract dispensation had run riot. In peace time much of the supply of the Army had for many years been facilitated by resort to the contract system, with the result that we had built up a connection with certain reliable contractors who gave us good value at an honest margin of profit. Such men as Syed Muratib Ali of Lahore had never failed to deliver the goods; while they in their turn had obviously accumulated considerable wealth. But with a vast and sudden expansion of the Army the system appeared to get out of hand. On all sides there were tales of huge profits and public money was undoubtedly passing in enormous sums without any effective scrutiny. With the Japanese menace a reality, one particular aspect of expenditure open to the public gaze was aerodrome construction. Round Delhi a circle of large aerodromes arose on private land, which involved the land being acquired for a number of years from the owners who were mostly small *zemindars*. Political agitators from Delhi were swift to avail themselves of such an opportunity and the people were told that the Government were trying to steal their land. The compensation price offered was represented as being wholly inadequate. The plight of a helpless peasantry under an oppressive bureaucracy was played up. The people took the bait and up went the compensation. There was little time for competitive contract operation. We needed the cloth or the cement or the wood or whatever commodity it happened to be and it is difficult to see in the circumstances how we could have procured our needs quickly in any other way. The new contractors were quick to take advantage of Government gullibility with the result that Government had to set up a special Tribunal to try cases of fraud and corruption. The kind of case which came to their cognizance would be the use of inferior material for military construction with the consequent collapse of buildings or bridges.

Perhaps an even more manifest deterioration took place in our search for men. As with material we had to find the men quickly. Here I was well placed to watch the extraordinary acrobatics of the lower recruiting agencies. An obsession was abroad that a man who could prove himself responsible for the production of a large number of recruits would, after the war, have untold privileges showered upon him by a grateful Government. There was certainly some excuse for thinking on

these lines, for the distribution of favours in the form of land grants for recruiting services began in a small way in 1943. Even so, it was difficult to explain the vast trade that was quickly built up in the enlistment of recruits. A recruit seldom was given the opportunity to present himself of his own initiative. There was always at least one sleuth and sometimes two imposed between the recruit himself and the recruiting office.

The kind of procedure which became common was for the Deputy Commissioner to announce his intention of visiting a certain tehsil on a certain date on which occasion he would wish to see ten recruits ready for enlistment. The glad news would be passed on by the tehsildar to the local gentry who would in turn enlist the services of an agent for a small consideration. It is easy to see how soon a commercial process developed, with all the intricacies of mild and sometimes comic intrigue. On such an occasion as above we may suppose that five old men might get credit for two recruits each. Certificates would be issued accordingly and the proud recruiter would receive a sum of five rupees for each recruit. It mattered not if the recruit was subsequently medically unfit; and of the ten hopefuls originally paraded perhaps two might find their way into the Army. A further development which the authorities had to contend with was the production of a recruit from a distant district well away from that of the recruiter. This led to the emergence of the professional recruit, who together with the professional recruiter formed a formidable combination for the distraction of the recruiting staff. There was a sinister subtlety in this, in that recruits from outside a District could be counted to the numerical credit of the District in which they appeared for enlistment for the greater glory of the recruiting staff and civil administration of that District.

Delhi station became a centre of a trade of slippery young men who for payment would catch a train to a distant station, there to be registered in the name of a recruiter whom they had never seen, followed by either subsequent desertion or medical refusal, followed by a return to Delhi to await the next offer.

In Districts such as Rawalpindi, Attock, Rohtak or Jhelum with well-established martial traditions the flow of recruits was steady and methods were not over-confused with these contortions. It was in the less distinguished areas such as the Karnal District where cases came more to notice. Counter-measures were of course adopted. For the recruit produced from outside the District two rupees instead of five rupees were awarded, the object being to encourage the big zemindars, to whom we looked for assistance, in a sense of their local responsibility. Later recruits were vaccinated with an identity mark to obviate the professional recruit who appeared at two or three recruiting offices within the month.

Looking back at the idiosyncrasies of recruiting, it is fairly certain that had we been able to foresee developments we would have set about the task in a different manner, building up a large reliable recruiting staff drawn from the Army itself and supported by picked pensioners recalled to the colours with professional pay in place of work on an honorary basis. Such an organization being subject to military discipline

would have been free from the commercial attachments which were bound to arise with the more makeshift methods which had to be adopted. Nevertheless, speaking without any inside knowledge, I imagine we raised as many men as could be equipped and used; and the claim that the Indian Army of about two and a half million men was a voluntary army is one that is, in the main substance, true and of which we may well be proud.

The recruiting staff became quickly tuned up to modern propaganda methods and many of them developed a taste for oratory and the recruiting "Mela" became a feature in the country-side. On one of these occasions, I found myself heavily involved in a very ambitious function of this nature. There was a certain Sikh recruiting officer, Major Sujjan Singh, a friend of mine, who was full of enterprise. Boldly he launched out on arrangements for a meeting of mammoth dimensions with invitations to all and sundry without much thought as to the administrative arrangements involved. At one time there was to be an elephant procession with Maharajas, public Ministers and recruiting officers in grand confusion! Major Sujjan Singh asked me to lend him a hand with arrangements for the actual meeting and I quickly became aware of the pompous intricacies with which the authorities surround a function when official guests and speakers of public significance participate in the proceedings.

The eventual "bag" for the meeting included the Maharaja of Patiala, an Air Vice-Marshal, the Punjab Premier, the Ministers for Revenue and Development, Dr. Moonje of the Hindu Mahasabha, the Director of Recruiting and Master Sujjan Singh, a Sikh Akali leader. The first obstacle arose over the name of the function. We wanted to call it a Durbar. This was apparently contrary to all precedence for a Durbar connoted that a Government official should preside. Our next difficulty was that we wished the Maharaja of Patiala, as the chief guest, to present sanads for recruiting. It was apparently against all the conventions for a Ruling Prince to present rewards to subjects of British India, particularly in British Indian territory. Then came the problem of the order in which speeches were to be made, involving questions of prestige with which the civil authorities were much concerned. Finally it appeared that there were civil regulations governing the width of the carpet, the layout of the arena and a complete drill for the master of ceremonies. Doubtless all this had been borrowed from ancient Mogul custom and was admirable for purposes of lending dignity to a Governor's visit; but it all seemed unnecessarily petty when our only object was to induce the youth of the country-side to go and fight the Japanese. The great day arrived and all went well. Dr. Moonje refrained from politics and Sir Chhotu Ram, limited to ten minutes (an unusual experience for him), made a witty little speech in which a story of a lion having his tail scratched by a jackal appealed to the zemindar audience. About a thousand recruits were paraded, stripped and self-conscious, to the gaze of the public. The distinguished guests were able to walk down a human herbaceous border of serried rows of young men with brown shining



bodies on which were inked up the various symbols of their recruiting classification.

It was in such ways that, every now and then, the necessary stimulus kept the flow equal to the demand. In completing the recruiting staff great difficulty was experienced in finding officers with the necessary energy who could also claim the respect of the people and had the tact for intimate dealings with tehsildars and the local gentry. It was obviously preferable to use men of families of social significance. Yet these were so often effete young men who might well themselves be open to the challenge that they were not with fighting units. With a certain type of young man, to become a recruiting officer represented reconciling comfortable employment with national service. That particular qualities of mind and stamina might be required did not occur to these mild opportunists. The most complete panacea for all our troubles, could we have afforded it, would have been to have taken our pick of the fighting divisions in the Middle East and spread them on tour over the recruiting areas; for these were the men who could speak with conviction and authority. Behind their efforts would have been the real substance of enthusiasm. But at the time such measures were of course quite impossible. Elsewhere I have spoken of our difficulties in the Civil Liaison organization in being unable to cope with the broader application of propaganda to touch the student community or the world of commerce or in fact any large section of the public outside the potential recruiting areas. We did our best but our more legitimate duties took up most of the time. The propaganda section of the Recruiting Directorate was not trained to such specialized work and it was therefore decided to open up a special branch for this particular attack: so yet another office of contact with the country came into existence and "Public Liaison" appeared. It was laid on for some curious reason in the Punjab and Assam,<sup>1</sup> two Provinces with completely different ethnological backgrounds. It would surely have been more logical to have attacked those areas which we knew to be unsympathetic to any co-operative war activity through political antagonism and the eastern United Provinces and Bihar would have been a happy hunting-ground for the new Department. "Public Liaison" were certainly full of inventive notions of appeal. For instance, they effectively identified the message of India's war aim with her struggle for freedom, adding local folk songs and dancing girls to spice the more serious argument. Their leader, a wild Irish enthusiast with an excellent command of Punjabi,<sup>2</sup> was determined at all costs to drive home his teaching to both town and country. In my own experience the less sensitive yet tractable audiences of the villages could with difficulty be made to comprehend any idea of the meaning of the word "freedom." By chance I stumbled on a comment from western philosophy which I believe usually conveyed a message to their

<sup>1</sup> This is the same organization to which Mr. Horace Alexander refers in his *Penguin Special, India Since Cripps* (Chapter VII). I agree with the author that the Midnapore District of Bengal would have been a more appropriate area for its extended activities.

<sup>2</sup> Lt.-Colonel M. Kilroy. See Chapter V, page 68.

simple intellects. It was Voltaire who said: "I disagree with every word you say but I would fight to the death to defend your right to say it." Somehow this wisdom, put into one Urdu sentence, conveyed more of the deeper meaning of the war than half an hour of vague rhetoric.

In energizing the vast machinery of war it was inevitable that Government should follow the well-understood methods of scattering titles and awards. I suppose the obsession for a handle to one's name is more of a business in India than elsewhere. It seems in modern times to have traded on human weakness all over the world. In its primitive form it is manifest in a multiplication of medal awards while in the more orthodox aspect it takes shape in the distribution of titles. In India the business is reduced to a fine art. This is merely a statement of fact and not a criticism. Indeed it would be difficult to know exactly who to criticize; he who gives or he who takes. Apart from the medals there are at least six different suffixes to a name which the diligent servant of Government covets. The Moslem may expect to become either a "Khan Sahib" or a "Khan Bahadur." The Hindu awaits a "Rao Sahib" or a "Rao Bahadur." If he is of a non-agricultural class the "Rao" changes to "Rai." A Sikh becomes a "Sardar Sahib," or a "Sardar Bahadur," a title which sometimes hardly satisfies him, since the suffix of "Sardar" is so often added as a mark of respect to anyone to whom one wishes to express a polite greeting. The war offered a great opportunity for seeking and dispensing these favours, and twice a year, when the lists came out, for a week or so there was topic enough in the civil administration for congratulations and disappointment. An officer who was expected to put up carefully prepared lists of recommendations found that the "Honours and Awards" confidential file absorbed far too much time which might profitably have gone to getting on with his legitimate business. The civil rules for the submission of names were surrounded by a mountain of qualifications and I confess that the frequent demands for recommendations irritated me intensely and I became careless in submitting my lists and inclined to treat the whole subject with levity. In this attitude it is fair to myself to add that I received encouragement from the subtle hints of my staff who, without direct demands, would cunningly communicate at appropriate moments their exact qualifications to fit the particular awards which would suit them.

In occasional contacts with the colossal and cumbrous war machine that, despite all efforts, grew at the centre, my imagination was drawn to wonder whether, over the other side, the enemy had half the paraphernalia to administer his armies which we had erected. At a time when there was a universal shortage of paper and books and newspapers were being drastically curtailed, the amount of official literature pouring into the office, which no one had time to look at, was paradoxical. I remember on one occasion receiving half a dozen enormous maps of Europe, a couple of army pamphlets on the resettlement of British soldiers in England, a large roll of excellent recruiting posters which I gave to my small son, and a coloured diagram of an enormous mosquito issued by

an anti-malarial enthusiast; all of which could go safely straight into the waste-paper basket. This was almost a weekly experience.

I recall too wandering down corridor after corridor of G.H.Q., the variety and profusion of black sign-boards doping the brain to a dull sense of my own insignificance! Public Relations—Public Information—The Burma Office of Untraced Documents—The Adviser in Psychiatry to the Government of India—The Director of a Directorate to report on the reduction of G.H.Q.! Eventually I found the particular medical authority for whom I was searching. He was busy discussing whether death by drowning was pensionable as a wound or an injury or a disease.

And yet in spite of all sins of omission and commission, in spite of the black market, in spite of plenty in one Province and famine in another, the greater number of the population of India survived these years with their mode of living and their economy less disturbed than that of any other belligerent. There was much failure and much success. We had not the co-operation of the largest political organization of the country; but in contradiction to the completely distorted representation of India at war in the Press the co-operation of the majority was behind the war effort. It is part of the Indian puzzle that the voice which is loudest in public receives recognition, while the more silent yet far larger voice of good will, which fought India's war, passes unheard in the forum of world opinion.

One could hardly go further to claim that the will of the people was concentrated in the struggle; for where the bulk of the population is illiterate, no Government, however popular or representative, can hope to defeat national ignorance on such a scale and in so short a time. But at least there was acceptance of the situation and in these circumstances it is remarkable that Government accomplished so much from such small beginnings.

## CHAPTER XIX

### RANDOM RECORDS

IF I SIT STILL IN A CHAIR AND SHUT MY EYES AND LOOK BACK OVER THE past years to rediscover those moments in India which have been memorable, I am usually defeated in that the greater events, such as shooting the first tiger, visits to Ellora and Ajanta, watching the Jaipur team play polo or drifting round the dense crowds of the All-India Hindu Mahasabha, recede into comparative obscurity and instead a host of stupid little incidents take their place.

Usually they were trivial affairs which at the time made me rant and rage; and I suppose the conclusion is that tests of the control of the temper register more deeply than moments of bliss! Here is one such episode. I remember driving my station wagon up to a level crossing on the Grand Trunk Road near by a small country railway station. When I arrived there were about five lorries and ten bullock carts on

either side of the gates. The station was five hundred yards down the line. The lorry drivers said the gates had been shut for twenty minutes. I asked the gateman to open the gates since there was no sign of a train and one could see for two miles down the line in either direction. He said he could not do so without permission from the station-master who had some automatic control over the gates which in turn allowed the gatesman's key to operate or not according to the station-master's inclination. The gateman said I could ring up the station-master from the telephone box by the gates. I tried and the telephone was out of order. I accordingly walked briskly along the line to the station, searched out the station-master and put the case of the unfortunate road travellers to him on the unassailable grounds that there was no train! He said that the train had left the last station and the regulations were that after that the gates must be closed until the train was through. Just then the train suddenly appeared and drew up in the station. I happened to look down the line and saw that the gates had now miraculously opened and the traffic, in the meanwhile swollen to about thirty bullock carts and lorries, was at last moving!

I walked disconsolately back to the level crossing and by the time I was there the train was of course about to leave the station in my direction and the gates were again closed. Meanwhile the rest of the traffic was through and away. Finally I broke the pencil point produced by the lugubrious gateman for me to record in the complaint book what was to have been at least three pages of attack on the entire North-Western Railway Company. Perhaps after all it was not unnatural that this brief affair registered convincingly!

On another occasion I was travelling up to Kashmir in a lorry full of passengers. As usual it was hopelessly overloaded with our luggage on top bulging over the sides of the roof. We came to Domel where one passes through the State Customs barrier. The passage of a Customs office all over the world is rather like a game of poker with two hands left in. In the case of this particular office it is complicated by the most astonishing statistics of weights and values which have to be furnished and recorded. This quickly deteriorates into pure guess-work with the Customs official marking up illegible entries in a large incomprehensible form which he keeps to himself. Doubtless it has its significance when later the monthly receipts are submitted. My Indian fellow-passengers accepted the situation with quiet resignation and it therefore took our lorry about an hour to negotiate this hurdle. We would have been away ten minutes earlier had it not been for the fact that at the last moment an official spotted a bowl of goldfish for which I was responsible. This I admit was a quick one on him. The Kashmir State breed trout and it was clear that the clerk's first reaction was to regard my goldfish as a direct challenge to the State trout-breeding industry! I endeavoured to explain to him that the fish were being taken up to my family as "pets"; animals maintained for the sake of affection and interest. The idea of affection for a fish was too much for the Customs Officer to swallow; and I myself produced it with little conviction. Eventually I think we

stuffed robots. In emulating the English model, however, avoid entertainment developing on the lines of Disraeli's verdict on the country house week-end which he described as "the monotony of organized platitude!" Let there be by all means be entertainment; lunch parties, dinners and dances. Such things oil the social machine and play their part in the capitals of India just as they have done in the days of the great political receptions in London. But we should be certain that their happy effect is not cramped by too pompous a display of formality. There must certainly be organization and order, but it will be all the more effective if kept behind the scenes. The effect of sheer display is not an entirely simple matter. Our grandfathers said that it impressed the masses. This is true. Crowds of any nation like to see their soldiers in colourful uniforms with bands playing them cheerily down the street. It would be an insensitive dull dog whose heart could not rejoice as the massed bands of the Brigade of Guards swing by and His Majesty rides down the Mall on a fine summer's morning for the Trooping of the Colour.

An Indian probably enjoys his public Tamashas even more than others. The Fair, the Circus and the Ceremony will draw him in happy holiday mood. But there are those not of the crowd; the intelligentsia with the normal sympathies connected with socialism who regard the expenditure of Government funds on entertainment and display as the misdirection of money which should be going to services of public utility; and their views must not be ignored.

During my time with the Bombay Body Guard, the Governor, Sir Roger Lumley,<sup>1</sup> took a keen interest in his small unit and was anxious to carry through a reorganization involving the replacement of Sikhs and Rajput Moslems by Mahrattas, who are troops of the Bombay Presidency. I worked out the details and half the scheme was carried through before I left. It involved a large sum of money being advanced to pay off the discharged men and towards this the Maharaja of Kolhapur<sup>2</sup> made a handsome contribution.

But a point of significance is that the scheme could not have been carried through without the full approval of the local Government. Bombay then had a Congress Ministry and it was not without doubts that they were reminded of the existence of a Body Guard at all. So far as I remember, the Bombay Government was only called on to meet a small portion of the initial outlay and the Governor was able not only to persuade them to agree to the proposal but to enlist the active interest of the Chief Minister, Dr. Kher.

In those days civil government and Indian politics were a closed book to me. But I saw and heard enough to know that Sir Roger's quiet charm smoothed out many hurdles in the rather shy initial relationship of the Bombay Secretariat and the young Congress Ministry. The governorship of Bombay at that particular time could have been no

<sup>1</sup> Now Earl of Scarborough.

<sup>2</sup> Kolhapur is a descendant of the great Shivaji and is regarded as the leader of the Mahrattas in the South.

sinecure. Sir Roger was certainly not alone in shouldering the burden, for Lady Lumley was indefatigable in her quota of the day's work.

The public of Bombay always appeared to enjoy seeing the Presidency Body Guard at public functions, such as the occasional State arrival on the Bombay race-course. We certainly afforded them a spectacular picture and I doubt if the Household Cavalry could have taught the men much about "spit and polish." I was always relieved when a race-course parade was over, for many of our horses were English thoroughbreds, who the year before had been thundering down the straight past the grand-stands!

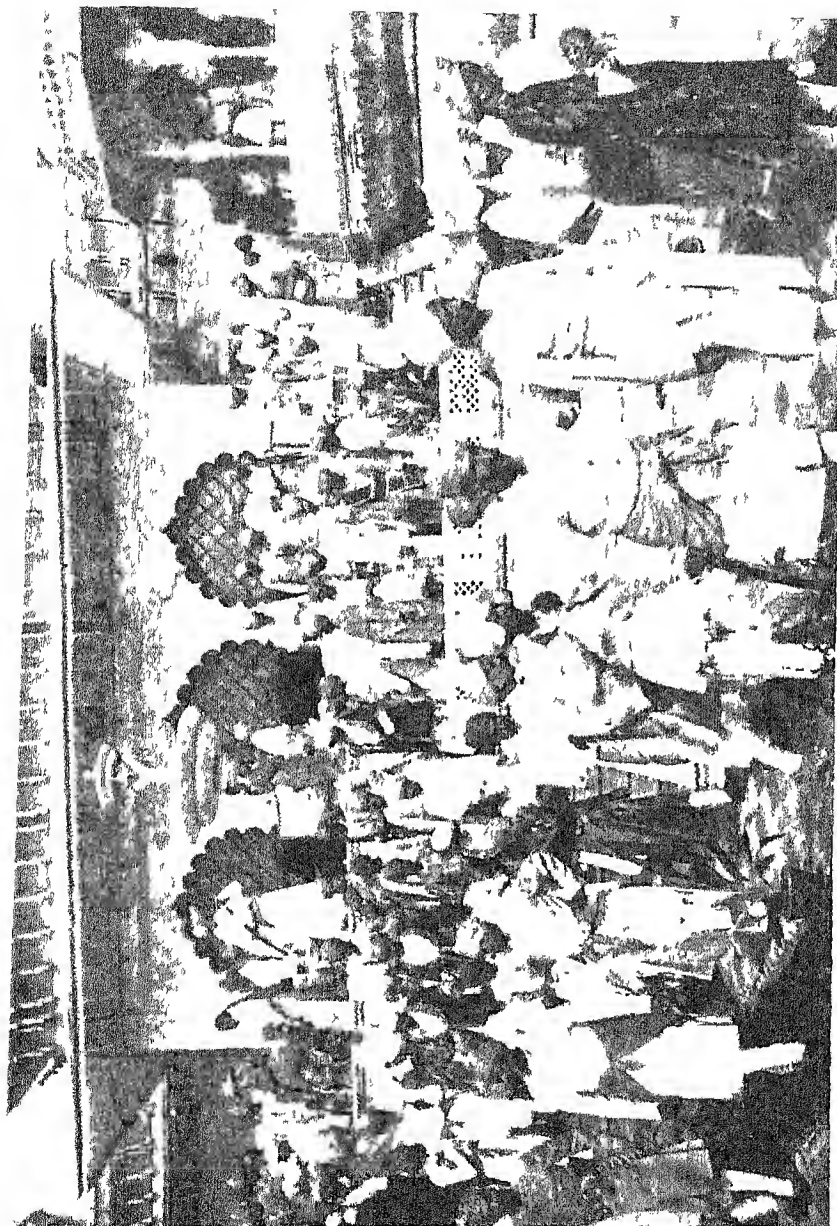
In the matter of Bombay racing the Ministry was not quite so accommodating. The Home Minister, Mr. Munshi, knew nothing of racing and not only felt it his duty to regard the racing industry as an organization of doubtful morality, to be taxed to capacity, but also took the view that if it was to be recognized it should be Indianized as rapidly as possible. The Government accordingly proceeded to tax the course out of existence, hardly a friendly procedure when the R.W.I.T.C.<sup>1</sup> were at the same time handing over enormous sums of money to Bombay charities. In regard to Indianization Major Colin Gulliland, the Secretary, had much difficulty in persuading the Home Minister that one could not train a jockey in under a year and that a two-year-old colt or filly took two years and eleven months to produce!

Those were the days of prohibition. The Congress motive was above reproach. It aimed at preventing the many thousands of mill hands from drawing their pay on Friday afternoon and running through it in the toddy shops on Friday evening. But its application in effect was chaotic. The unfortunate Parsee community, who enjoyed their evening short drinks, suffered the most and many of the retail liquor stores owned mainly by Parsees were thrown out of business. The paradox was that Dr. Gilder, the Parsee member of the Ministry, was responsible for the experiment.

The Government was extremely accommodating to the European community who were given a very adequate monthly quota; but their generosity frequently created moments of embarrassment in a mixed social party. Europeans received permits and a particularly obnoxious situation arose at the bar of the Taj Hotel where a large room was labelled "For Permit-holders Only." Luckily the many humours of a most irritating situation were appreciated by everyone; but the amount of back-stair transaction and appeasement in return for official accommodation has probably never been equalled in India before!

Bombay in the war was an exciting cosmopolitan city, full of sailors from every nation in the world with countless numbers of our own armies in transit and on leave. Everybody likes the place. The Princes take their leisure in Hollywood mansions on the Warden Road side. Close by in Byculla restless thousands surge eternally through the teeming bazaars like armies of ants disturbed under a human foot. Adventurous

<sup>1</sup> Royal West of India Turf Club.

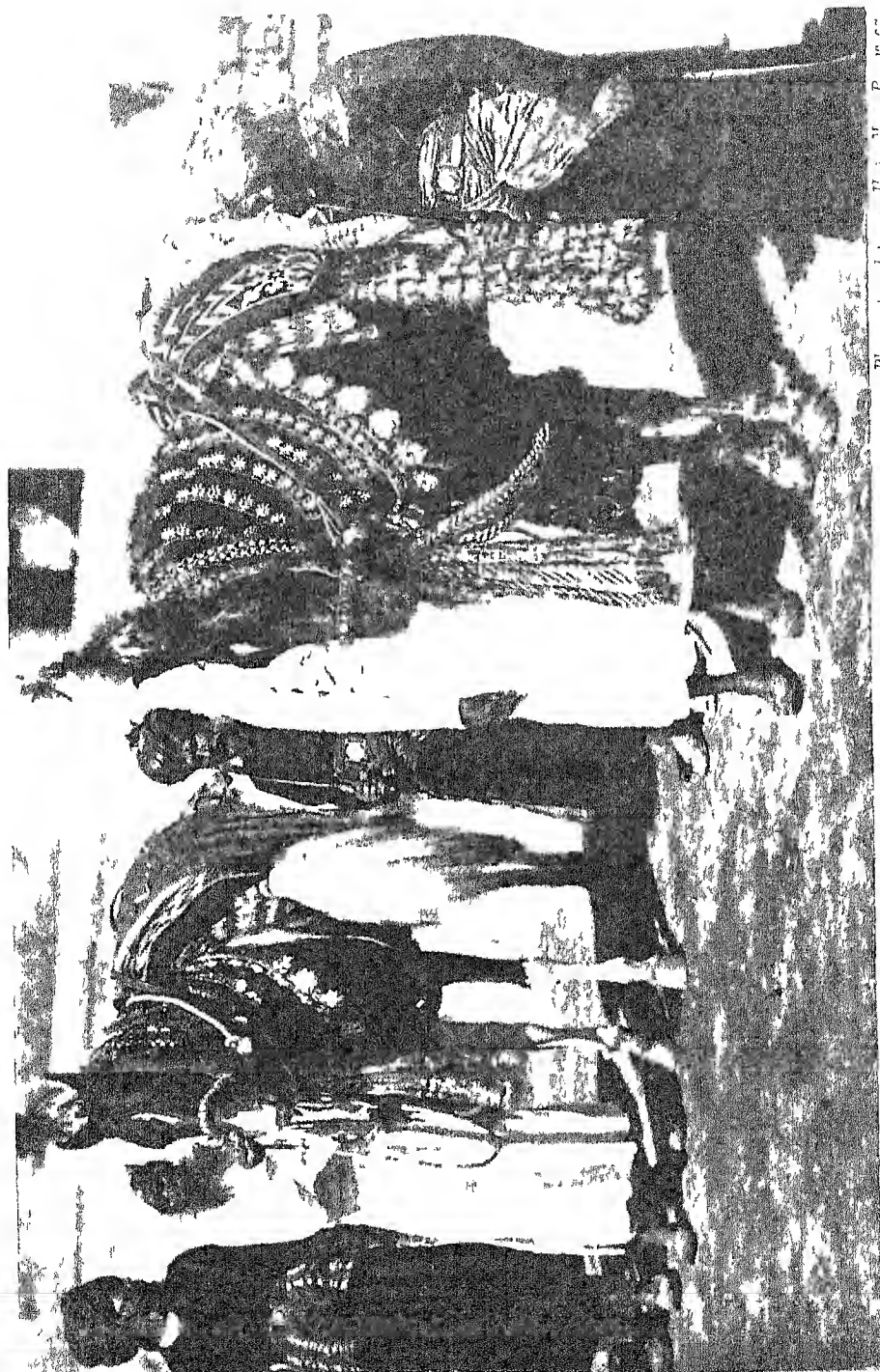


[Photograph by the Hon. Mrs. Birdwood]

INDIAN INDIA

Sardars and Officials of the State leaving after the Installation Durbar—Alwar, 1936





## INDIAN INDIA Presentation Stallions at Ldampur



Sikhs and Pathan chowkidars down from the North, living on blackmail, rub shoulders with Borahs,<sup>1</sup> Gujratis, Parsees, Brahmans and Jews. The Baghdad Arab, over for the races, moves among them. Ash-besmeared Sadhus and saffron-robed Sanyasis are in the throng; while high above, the prostitutes peep down from behind their curtains and gaze listlessly on the mighty human ebb and flow. Every now and then the politicians come in from all over India and platforms with Congress and League flags spring up on Chowpatty beach in the best Hyde Park tradition. There are many smells and much garbage and terrible poverty but life in the city is never dull.

Outside Kolhapur House at Mahalaxmi in the days of the late Maharaja one would see a Rolls-Royce car sweep in and out with a very large potentate seated in the middle surrounded by a dozen bobbing heads in the manner of a basket of hens going to market. This juggernaut was completed by two or three crouching chaprasis precariously perched on the running boards outside. I always stopped to watch the phenomenon go by in the morbid hope of seeing a chaprasi fly off at a corner.

At the other end of the town, of an evening, the crowds parade up and down by the Gateway of India; they pause to gaze across the harbour and count the ships and speculate on the next convoy; or to watch American soldiers grouped round the man with the cobra in the basket. I have never liked men with cobras in baskets. The old black bear on a rope also fills me with shame; and much as I dislike the Indian brown monkey, I am not reconciled to seeing him pulled around the bazaar with a leather collar round his waist. The conjurer of the East has gained an undeserved reputation, probably due to the undoubted excellence of the Port Said "Galli-Galli" man with his comic repertoire of patter. I am certain the Indian rope trick has never been seen or performed, while the small boys who turn kick somersaults in the air or put both knees behind their heads cannot compete with their Chinese or Japanese counterparts.<sup>2</sup> As for the strolling astrologer legislation should be taken against him. But there is one rather simple turn of the Indian conjurer which I have only seen twice and which fills me with delight. I am thinking of the performing parrots. I have watched these birds turn somersaults through hoops, pull toy carts, spell out names chosen by the audience by pecking industriously away at enormous letter cards, and all with a slow and solemn dignity which was ludicrously captivating.

Talking of monkeys I have never discovered to what degree they are respected in the Hindu community. That excellent deity Hanuman was, I presume, a brown monkey. I have always hoped for the suggestion that he might have been a grey langur, an animal whose grace of movement on the tree-tops has never failed to command my admiration. When climbing the hill from Kalka to Simla I have seen the langurs

<sup>1</sup> A Moslem trading community.

<sup>2</sup> Acrobats, like a hundred other professionals, are a "caste." In Bombay the Kolhatias are a wandering acrobat caste. In Mysore the Dumbars are well-known acrobats.

watching the train, their beady little black eyes in mute protest at man's intrusion, and I have felt like a trespasser on private property. On this hypothesis I suppose England really belongs to a lot of snails! The tiger is certainly king of the jungle, but luckily his depredations on poor villagers give a privileged few the right to enjoy shooting him.

The Indian tiger has certainly kept many British officers happy, and when in their old age they can no longer shoot him they write up his praises and hang up his stuffed head and generally develop the jargon of the angler who has caught a fish "so long." I admit, as one hears the distant roar of the beaters approaching, the first moment that a streak of yellow and black flesh flashes in the rustling grass with a sudden crackle of trampled dry dak leaves a cold thrill goes through me, and for a second or so I hold my breath. But on blank days there can be hours in a machan, when one becomes extremely stiff and much depends on whether one is alone or in company. When perched precariously aloft in intimate proximity with a complete stranger for two hours, you may or may not draw luck.

On such an occasion my wife was once isolated with an old Rajput a typical scion of ancient orthodox nobility. As the minutes and hours went by, not a word was spoken (which was probably a very happy solution). At last to break the ice and knowing the old gentleman to have two wives, she led cautiously with a rather startling question.

"Which of your two wives do you love the most?" she ventured.

There was a pause and then very deliberately came the answer, "I love with both." Conversation then collapsed.

The late Maharaja of Bikaner, a magnificent shikari with either rifle or gun, told me that he held the record for a single achievement in tiger shooting and he showed me a picture of three tigers put up simultaneously from the same patch of cover, which he had accounted for in three quick shots, with a left and right and a second rifle ready. Since then, my friend Lt.-Colonel Caldecott of the 13th Lancers has informed me of his own accomplishment which must obviously stand as a world record. In the same manner he knocked over four tigers in three shots, a lucky bullet passing through one tiger in the right spot and killing another which he had not seen!

And on this note of sporting chance I close with a story which will be old to many, but which is worth repeating for the few who may not have heard it. Five men of different nationalities were asked to submit essays on the elephant. The German called his essay "Elephantiasis psychologica." The American entitled his essay "Bigger and better elephants." The Frenchman's contribution was "Les éléphants et ses amours." The Russian caption was "The elephant—is it real?" And the Englishman of course wrote, "With my rod and gun through the Sahara after the elephant." Perhaps Congressmen of good will might forgive me if I add my own contribution for the Indian, which is "Riding on an elephant after freedom."

## CHAPTER XX

### VERDICT ON BOOKS

AS THE INDIAN CRISIS DRAWS NEAR—AND THE COMING SITUATION WILL without doubt merit the title—interest in India quickens and literature from all sources pours on to the market. So varied has been the nature of innumerable recent contributions that I have felt that there is a place for a mild analysis on books and their making. One is tempted to spread the net wide and draw in that immense library of scholarly objective study which Englishmen have lavished on the Indian scene.<sup>1</sup> In such a category one would place Tod's *Rajasthan* as probably the peak of achievement.

Some time ago the *Illustrated Weekly Times of India* conducted an interesting experiment in the form of a competition to discover the 15 most valuable books on India. Eventually the winning solution was published alongside the paper's own list. Only six books were common to both lists. These were E. M. Forster's *Passage to India*, Mulk Raj Anand's *The Coolie*, Sir S. Radhakrishnan's *The Hindu View of Life*, Minoo Masani's *Our India*, Jawaharlal Nehru's *Autobiography* and Garratt and Thompson's *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India*. The winner included the immortal *Kim*, and the *Times of India* had Gandhi's *My Experiments in Truth*. From this list a student will know what to read.

I am concerned mainly with the present and so we must be content with only a glance at some of the modern contributions. These we might classify as the informative, the fictional and the impressionist.

By far the greater number of books which give us solid information are from men with Indian service. A retired Civil Servant laboriously records in admirable detail the sum total of his experience and research. In this category we would place Darling's *Punjab Peasant in Prosperity and Debt* and Calvert's *Wealth and Welfare of the Punjab*.<sup>2</sup> Quite by chance I came across Mr. H. C. Trevaskis's *Land of the Five Rivers*. I turned the pages and saw the reason why such a book would have little public appeal. There was a long analysis of the basis and development of land settlement from the time of Ranjit Singh. There was a detailed description of the climate and geology of the land complete with charts and statistics. This was far too solid for public consumption. Yet it is a sad reflection that the success of a book on India is probably in inverse proportion to its content of concentrated experience! The inquiring mind of modern times is in a hurry just as much as everything else and so the book of generalization sells and the work of the scholar goes unrewarded. Above all to be out of date is to court failure.

<sup>1</sup> The Library at India House has over 5,000 unofficial books on India on its Register. Official publications run into many thousands.

<sup>2</sup> M. L. Darling, I.C.S.—H. C. Calvert, I.C.S. The latter's name is always associated with the stimulation he gave to the co-operative movement which has done so much to improve the lot of the peasant.

A book for which I have a personal appreciation is the late Sir Michael O'Dwyer's *India as I knew it*. This is the straightforward record of a fine Civil Servant of the old school, who gave of his best to the country; and it is right that his life, typical of many others, should find a place in history. There is also the story of the tragic days of Amritsar in 1919 told from an angle now given little prominence; that of the responsible official on the spot.

Reference has already been made to *India and Democracy* by Sir George Schuster and Guy Wint. It is the type of book which, though written particularly for the nineteen-forties, contains that essence of thought which will not change over generations. It also places the picture of India in the correct focus against the background of world affairs.

Professor Coupland's work, to which constant reference has been made, must stand alone as a study of the present constitutional position, even though we may not agree with all of his final conclusions. Although hardly a book for a sunny holiday, it has a light touch compared to that of many other similar works and it is as clear and lucid an analysis of a heavy subject as one could wish for.

The fictional field is vast,<sup>1</sup> from modern classics such as E. M. Forster's *Passage to India* and J. R. Ackerley's *Hindu Holiday*, to the whole range of the shikar enthusiasts with their "Rod and Gun" exploits in all weathers up and down mountain precipices or in the depths of the jungle. One cannot possibly cover this immense library and so I draw attention to only one book which I suggest is the best "tiger" book ever written. It is *The Man-eaters of Kumaon* by Jim Corbett, a forest officer of the United Provinces. Missionaries and forest officers probably get nearer to the country and its people than others of us who spend years in the confines of a few civil or military stations. I venture too that Major Corbett has in his time saved the lives of many thousands, often at grave risk to his own life. There could be few stories of greater service and his exploits, told in a simple direct style, are welcome refreshment after eternal politics.

For those of us who live in India the Indian novel so often bears a familiarity which leaves us indifferent; and the uneventful round of station life needs to be handled with exceptional imagination if it is to appeal to people who in their leisure read Priestley and Cronin and Philip Gibbs and the rest of the array of brilliance. There is one novel which should hold its own in such competition. It is Christine Weston's *Indigo*. There I found both truth and imagination in a story of the conflict of human souls under the stresses and strains of that intense emotional scaffolding which surrounds the building of the future India. More eloquent than a hundred papers or reports is the little drama enacted round the tumbledown compounds of Amritpore. To me it somehow recalled the faded splendour of a certain small village, Hansi, on the main road between Rohtak and Hissar, where I had so often passed the home of the famous James Skinner. To-day a numberless tribe of Skinners

<sup>1</sup> See *A Survey of Anglo-Indian Fiction*. By Bhupal Singh, M.A. Oxford University Press, 1934.

of all ages and colours come and go from the old house. Every monsoon the family make the trip to Missoori in the hills and James Skinner's relics are left to the mercy of the monsoon and the roof annually collapses. The glory is departed.

For the tourist seeking a brief supplement to a Baedeker, there is an excellent little book, *Introduction to India* by F. R. Moracs and R. Stimson. It appeared at a time when British and American troops were pouring into the country and the bookstalls were covered in cheap local guide books of strong political bias. As an example, men of the British Army must have rubbed their eyes when they read in *India Explained*, by B. J. Vaswani, that "the extreme need of independence for the welfare of India is clear from the fact that for these 100 years or more we have received no training in self-defence." In a small space the authors have managed to tabulate much useful information and have kept to a steady objective study. I happen to know that one of the authors, Robert Stimson, as a prominent Bombay journalist experiences no little difficulty in maintaining his balanced judgment of men and affairs under a bombardment of expressions of political opinion. That he comes through serenely his many friends will testify. I regret I never met his collaborator.

My complaint of the neglect of the machinery of administration was to some extent met recently by two small books from Civil Servants. They are Penderel Moon's *Strangers in India* and Sir Colin Garbett's *Friend of Friend*.<sup>1</sup> The former adopts a most attractive medium for setting out his views, which is to air them through the voice of a young I.C.S. officer arriving in the country with a fresh outlook, who is then able to test them out on a level-headed sympathetic senior. Whether in argument or in personal experience Mr. Moon is clear-headed. He left India with a reputation, as Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar, for ability and unorthodox views and I believe seeks to establish himself in journalism.<sup>2</sup>

Sir Colin Garbett's book is of the "ma-bap"<sup>3</sup> variety, a term originally applied in all innocence to convey at least England's best intentions but now more facetiously used to denote a kind of benevolent Colonel Blimp approach. There is a full record of Miss Katherine Mayo's personal vindication of the motives behind her book *Mother India*, which I do not think has ever been given the publicity it deserves. The reference to the Indian National Congress is perhaps dangerously brief and the author's conclusions are expressed in very general terms. He failed to give the Congress leaders credit for true patriotism, an omission suggesting that there are not any true patriots. This is an implication I do not accept. Reading this book after Mr. Moon's views, the diversity of opinion of

<sup>1</sup> Sir Colin Garbett, I.C.S., 1905-1941. At present serving as Minister for Reconstruction, Bhopal State.

<sup>2</sup> I have not read a later publication by the same author, *The Future of India* (Pilot Press, Ltd.). "By hook or crook British rule must be brought to an end." If, as I fear, this rather banal sentiment sums up Mr. Moon's conclusions, one cannot sanction the fate of 400 millions being settled with such levity.

<sup>3</sup> Literally "mother-father." Hence applied to indicate the past protective role of British administration.

two generations of Civil Servants was interesting, for they both covered much the same areas. It is interesting, too, to note that both in their own way attack the application of a Western legal code with its heavy machinery to an Indian peasantry. But the real value of this book is just that it is the story which many officers of the Indian Civil Service could tell of service rendered and accepted with mute appreciation.

It was with more than usual interest that I turned to *Verdict on India* by Mr. Beverley Nichols, for we had heard such various opinions on its value. Whether it had been actually banned in India no one seemed quite to know. That was in December 1944. But opinion ranged from those who stated that it was so bad that its sanction or prohibition would make no difference, to those who said it gave them a good laugh. The title was I think misleading. A "verdict" immediately conjured up a picture of an authoritative and deep study. It was to be informative, I imagined, accurate, fair and with some detailed conclusion as to India's constitutional future. I am afraid that, also with no justification, I had had the vague impression that there was some form of official sanction behind it.

I read it and discovered that it was nothing more or less than a perfectly normal travel book, recording the immediate reactions of an author of quick observation, ready wit and sensitivity. Had the book been called "Oriental impressions" or "An invalid in India," I would have known what to expect. In place of a study I found a diary, setting down many of the anomalies of Indian life which puzzle a visitor with a keen eye, particularly when his main business is to watch, listen and record. I admit that some of his touches made me giggle and I envy the author that quick conversational brush with which he lightly paints his picture. Nevertheless I feel that in justice to many Indians I should draw attention to some obviously loose comment. Mr. Nichols always states his case with emphasis; and emphasis is often accepted as truth merely because of the extra ring of conviction. When, for instance, I read that Indian stringed instruments have wire strings because gut strings might offend religious susceptibilities, I naturally take all comment beyond generalization with a grain of salt; for it is common knowledge that the Indian climate prohibits the use of gut strings and any violin player in India uses wire. In poking fun at the Bombay architecture he is of course simply recording what we all admit; which is that it is a medley of Gothic, Victorian and Mogul bits and pieces put together in the first days of the Bombay cotton prosperity of the eighteen-sixties. The Bombay Government architects, doubtless with the Albert Hall in mind, put up these monstrosities and Indians are in no way to blame; though between us we might by now have pulled them down! If Indians have been indifferent to their architecture and its development they certainly have had little Western inspiration to encourage them, and our own lamentable lack of taste in public building is everywhere evident.

Wherever Mr. Nichols chooses to launch his attack, he certainly dots his i's and crosses his t's, whether it be debunking Ayurvedic medicine or searching for Indian pictures; and in this, the lighter application of his

lash, he has my full support. There is no need for either Indians or Englishmen to get worked up just because they receive a little direct criticism. The right course is to ponder it and accept such of it as is true with a good grace. For example, it is true—and of no mean importance—that the Englishman, on his return to England, is regarded with some interest by his local public and is therefore expected to speak with a certain authority on India and its affairs. It is sad that in fact his dismal ignorance is more often evident, an ignorance which he himself accepts as perfectly natural. Before the war, in my experience, the interest of the English public was typified by a question which might frequently be put by one's neighbour at dinner in some such form as "What about old Gandhi?" It was difficult to know the kind of answer expected; and in these circumstances perhaps the inconsequence of Major A or Captain B, home on leave, would matter little. Yet Major A was an ambassador of his country and if he cannot give an intelligent reply, it is fairly certain there will be no intelligent questions.

Mr. Nichols was perhaps a little unkind when he attacked the ladies of Bombay for helping the war by going racing. I was in Bombay in the first few months of the war and my recollection is that the European community would have welcomed any form of war activity had there been the conditions and facilities for a clear programme of practical war work. But it was impossible for Bombay to make parachutes or shells or drive lorries or direct models in Air Raid Control rooms; so that when the ladies were told that racing profits went to the War Purposes Fund they rather naturally went along with a free conscience.<sup>1</sup>

In India the Press, art, architecture, music and the social foibles are all such fair game for facetious good humour that we have grown into the lazy habit of accepting them without comment. I therefore believe that it does no harm, and may do good, when someone with a fresh mind comes along and smartens up our apathy. The reaction may be delayed, for creating a public conscience is a drawn-out process, not perceptible over a short space of time. Nevertheless those who draw our attention to these matters fulfil a need, and India must take its criticism just as any other country in a world of free expression.

It is when Mr. Nichols leaves the readily assailable India of the tourist and turns to politics that I think he should have trod more warily. Was it necessary to attack Mr. Gandhi, whom he had never met, quite so violently? Is it really true that the Indian leader is devoid

<sup>1</sup> The war work of British women in India has recently come in for some publicity, a general accusation being made that they have not pulled their weight. In April 1945 correspondence in *The Times* gave Lady Louis Mountbatten and Lord Scarborough an opportunity to defend this rather defenceless community. The former was just back from a thorough tour of inspection and the latter spoke from his considerable experience in Bombay.

There are only 14,300 British women in India between the ages of 18 and 50. Of these 9,000 were employed in war work and 2,000 were exempt for good reasons. The truth is that where work is voluntary any woman without the stimulation of the war on her doorstep submits herself to disciplined war work with some difficulty. In such circumstances women need the sanction of an official organization. In my experience the rather ineffective attitude of about one half was always compensated by the superhuman efforts of the other half. In large cities such as Bombay a handful of women, British and Indian, struggled devotedly to entertain the many thousands of troops in transit.

of æsthetic sense? I do not think so. Is it not hopelessly misleading to a gullible British public to compare Gandhi with Hitler and to infer that, because the former finds himself accepted as an Eastern dictator, he is therefore of the same family as his Western counterparts? This at least I believe to be a complete travesty of truth.

In his whole approach to the political situation the author overstates his case, both in generalization and in detail. In generalization he assumes the unassailability of the Moslem League plan for Pakistan without any reference to the Sikh counter-demand or the sentiments of the Punjab Moslems themselves. In matters of detail he is frequently misleading. It is, for instance, hardly correct to say that a khaddar dhoti and a Gandhi cap are the counterpart of the brown shirt and the swastika. There is partial truth but that is all. The dhoti is the natural dress of millions, while the Gandhi cap is worn by many without any clear political intention. Once again there is over-emphasis. Yet another drastic statement is to assert that "some of the Princes have well-trained armies who would follow them to the death." Few Princes have forces of more than three or four battalions and while some of these would stand by their leaders in a hypothetical situation of chaos, many would find discretion the greater part of valour. One cannot afford to dip lightly into Indian politics and Mr. Nichols's obvious Moslem bias is not going to get us very far. Nevertheless, with a loose brilliance, he has brought out the salient character of the problem: which is that when India has decided who will accept power it is there on a tray.

From *Verdict on India* I turned to a brief little book, *Beggar My Neighbour* by Mr. Lionel Fielden. I rubbed my eyes, for it seemed hardly possible that these two writers, Lionel Fielden and Beverley Nichols, could really have been born of the same country, owing in their homes allegiance to the same King and suffering obedience to the same Government. It was certainly a tribute to the British democratic freedom of expression. Here was the whole case of India stated in diametrical opposition to the views of Mr. Nichols. Mr. Fielden's approach is I believe tempered by the fact that during his tenure of the appointment of Director of the All-India Radio he was constantly at sixes and sevens with the Government of India. We can well believe that in launching a vast enterprise charged with such potential power as an Indian broadcasting system there would be daily cause for petty conflict. Delhi is so frequently behind the times in taking to innovation.

My interpretation of this book was that the author had completely isolated himself in the cause of the Congress Working Committee to the exclusion of all other points of view: and I am examining it in some detail since it seems more convenient to challenge the issues which Mr. Fielden raises here than within the context of a general political survey. Once again Mr. Fielden's pen flows along on a melodious note, so that one senses the stimulation of an argument over a glass of port rather than an analysis based on facts. With me I am afraid the argument might deteriorate, for I could not read this book without exasperation. I thought of the Punjab villages through which I had roamed and the



Indian District community which I knew and it was clear that Mr. Fielden and I knew different Indias. No complete refutation can be given, for I found controversy in almost every sentence; and I therefore am committed to generalization with random selections of a few sensational features of his argument.

Mr. Fielden has a knack of obscuring a perfectly straightforward situation by putting it through a sort of intellectual sieve and arriving at the opposite answer to that which we expect. Take for example his reluctance to be worried overmuch with facts:—

“I take leave to doubt whether facts about Moslems and Hindus and Princes . . . will, though they may be balm to our sore of uneasiness, get us very much further.”

This may be so, but to ignore facts for dim theories will certainly get us nowhere. The author then proceeds to put six questions to the reader concerning India's welfare and administration. These are answered in turn by an Englishman and an Indian. The former is allowed a couple of lines to state his case, while the Indian each time elaborates his views in half a page or more.

One passage in the opening chapter at first led me to suppose that we would at least share in a common hope for the future. It was in this belief that I read:—

“An India permanently alienated from Britain, and falling willy-nilly into an Asian power group in a race for material gain, will be a threat not only to Britain herself and to the British Empire but a threat also to world peace. An India friendly and grateful to a generous Britain could provide, as perhaps no other country, a much needed link between East and West.”

But no sooner had I read this wisdom than in the next few sentences he destroyed my collaboration:—

“Few people, for instance, can now seriously credit the dear old story that England conquered India in a sort of bumbling absent-minded fit and just had to stay to keep order.”

Well, I am afraid that is roughly what I do believe. It began in trade and continued in trade and the frustration of trade interests. Only at one period at the end of the eighteenth century<sup>1</sup> might it be said that the hard decision to dominate actuated policy in all its aspects. The mere fact that it took the Crown 150 years to usurp the Company and assume ultimate responsibility is sufficient to place the manner and motive of the British expansion in its true perspective. Thus in his solicitude for Indian pride and opinion Mr. Fielden does less than

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter IX, page 105.

justice to Englishmen. If his task was to further happy British-Indian relations, he may receive the applause of certain Indian elements, but he leaves the gulf wider than before in embittering British opinion. Englishmen too are not devoid of feeling.

It is particularly in regard to India's war commitments that Mr. Fielden seemed to me to misjudge the position. He hints of our alleged arrogant assumption "that India should obediently, at the bidding of Britain, commit herself to a war which was none of her making and from which, like Egypt or Turkey, she might herself choose to hold aloof if she were free." I take this opportunity of meeting not only Mr. Fielden but the whole Congress case of nursed indignation on this issue.

The point is that it would not have mattered a damn what India's or Britain's or anyone else's inclination was in the matter. It was what the enemy thought which dictated the decision. Egypt may have held aloof. Her attitude would have profited her nothing, had Rommel's army had an extra punch left in it after crossing the desert. No sane man could disagree that while Britain was in any way associated with India, while the two were interlocked in a union, holy or unholy, Germany and Italy and later Japan would have made it their business to regard India as a potential prize for further war prosecution. This indeed is the declared assumption of Mr. Gandhi himself. The alternative, to withdraw from India in order gracefully to preserve her from her fate, apart from its fantastic unreality, was probably a strategic impossibility after the declaration of war. Without that declaration Mr. Fielden assumes that the enemy would meekly have folded his arms and stopped. Where? The picture of Britain abandoning at a moment's notice her entire Indian commitments in the hope of an accommodating recognition of a free India by the Nazis or the Japanese is one which normally it would be an insult to attribute to a sane man. If, in the peaceful years between the Act of 1935 and the outbreak of war, no serious step to a further constitutional advance had been taken, it is utterly unreasonable to suppose that on the outbreak of a major war of all times, we should undertake iconoclastic measures of fantasy. Such a gesture of readjustment could no more have saved India from the enemy's attack than could the Sermon on the Mount be understood by Hitler.

Mr. Fielden certainly admits the fundamental nature of the communal problem. In recalling the barren Nehru-Jinnah correspondence of June 1942 he says:—

"There undoubtedly yawns a gulf. I have not sought to minimize it."

He then continues:—

"To face it squarely is not thereby to exclude all hope of solution; above all to justify the *theory* that, until the two communities agree, India must be denied freedom and England will be justified in domination. . . . Must Indians be unborn, undreamed-of angels?"

This is a most dangerous understatement of the case, for it hints at a situation in which the margin of disagreement is narrow enough to evaporate with the British disappearance, whereas all the evidence is to the contrary; and one wonders what sort of freedom would be left to the millions in whose name all this rhetoric is expended.

It was with interest that I turned to his summary of the Cripps proposals and those fateful days in Delhi in April 1942. It did not surprise me to find no analysis of the proposals on their merits but much concern over attendant incidents. It was perhaps not diplomatic in an initial broadcast to declare:—

“Our proposals are definite and precise. If they were rejected by the leaders of Indian opinion, there will be neither the time nor the opportunity to reconsider the matter till after the war.”

But the motherly solicitude shown for Indian susceptibilities distorts the issues out of all proportion. If Indian opinion cannot occasionally take a mild knock it would more appropriately be sheltered in a home for old women! In his deep anxiety to avoid hurting tender feelings Mr. Fielden gives Indian leaders little credit for any toughness or common sense. Simultaneously as I was reading Mr. Fielden's treatment of the Cripps proposals I was also reading the views of Mr. Rajagopalacharia on the same subject in his pamphlet, *The way out*. I could not help reflecting that, had I not known the names of the two authors, I would undoubtedly have attributed the Englishman's opinion to the Indian and the Indian's opinion to the Englishman!

But one concession I will give Mr. Fielden. While I do not accept the picture of the British expansion in India as working to any preconceived plan, I do accept the fact that to-day Englishmen interpret the situation in terms of its effect on Britain and the Empire. Alongside doubts about our obligations to minorities and the ability of the Administration to function, we are also concerned with questions of Empire solidarity and economics. There is the selfish as well as the selfless aspect. The British attitude might be summarized as a belief that, if India is to remain a Union, the continuance of British control in the form of certain safeguards is essential, for the communal situation admits of no other conclusion. Supporting this belief would be the comfortable reflection that such control was compatible with the security of British trade. However liberal our approach to the problem, our view remains essentially British in quality. Mr. Fielden, in contrast, places himself thoroughly inside the mind of the Indian nationalist; and in doing so he probably brings us nearer to a greater sympathy with that frustrated Congress school which seeks imprisonment. It is difficult to understand the fury of repression which sees in every Englishman the scourge of foreign domination. Mr. Fielden does help to persuade us that the confused emotions of an Indian nationalist are but those of a normal human soul clutching at any straw by which he might save for himself a pride of nationhood. This is my only concession to a book which, though

cloaked in literary seduction, is in my view a plain misstatement of the Indian case.

A small book which, through its moderation, put the Indian national case persuasively is *The Indian Crisis* by John Hoyland. I repeat, the conclusions of a missionary with his background of sympathetic intimacy are always more impressive than the brief concentrated verdict of a traveller or the laboured bias of an official.

Another little book to which I am indebted is that of T. A. Raman. The book has the brief but adequate title of *India*. I had assumed that both by the sentiment of his book and from his name the author was a Moslem; and it was with surprise that I learnt that he had been European correspondent of a well-known Hindu newspaper. The book is a clear statement for those who want their information in condensed form.

I have referred to the fact that there is no adequate history of the Indian Army. Perhaps the circle of interest is too small to merit its undertaking. But there is a book by Major F. Yeats-Brown which I have just received entitled *Martial India*, which fully meets the immediate needs of the war era. The author was busy on it when he visited me last year and it was a pleasure to help him by putting him in touch with the homes of Indian soldiers, for his enthusiasm and sincerity were the qualities which would place the Indian soldier in his true colours before the British public. He of course knew India well as all who have read *Bengal Lancer* will readily appreciate. It was with deep regret that I learnt of his death on my return to England.

There is a Penguin Special, *India Since Cripps*, by Horace Alexander who is a scholar and traveller. It is easily written with a tendency to the sentimental when speaking of Mr. Gandhi, his fasts and affairs in general. So many of these writers seem to search for obscure explanations of simple issues. For instance, Mr. Alexander would have us believe that Gandhi's advice of "Do or die" was innocuous because he did not say "Kill or die"! There may be an academic distinction. But for hot-headed students the effect will obviously be the same. The value in this little book is concentrated in a most eloquent description of the plight of Bengal after the terrible cyclone in the Midnapore District in October 1942, with a subsequent summary of the Bengal famine and the problems it raised.

An example of the kind of criticism based on the hurried observation of the eye is a passage in Mlle. Eve Curie's book, *Journey Among Warriors*. This book has the ring of such sincerity that I hesitate to raise a note of discord. In a vivid picture of the terrible conditions in the Calcutta slums Mlle. Curie singles out Britain as the culprit:—

"A desperate kind of humanity lived there in the dirt and the sweat: tiny hungry children with shiny black eyes, who looked like frail and feeble animals. . . . Here were the evils that, alas, no proclamation brought by Sir Stafford Cripps at the eleventh hour would be able to change overnight. . . . No doubt Britain's achievements on the enormous sub-Continent populated by 390 million had

been many. . . . It remained however that the sinister spectacle of poverty, malnutrition, disease, obscurantism plus those of superstition and religious fanaticism were still keeping watch over India."

Had Mlle. Curie inquired a little deeper into the matter she would have discovered that the people's own Government of Bengal and the Calcutta municipality had no little say in the disgraceful state of the Calcutta slums.

Judging all these books as those of an era rather than a particular school of thought, they share the quality of brevity and they all pay attention to the political questions of the day at the expense of history or philosophy or culture or administration. Are we to conclude then that the days of detailed objective research are passing and that we are entering a period of hurried and rather erratic political criticism? I trust that some day there will be a return to the longer and more scholastic approach and that there will be other things to talk about than politics.

I have spoken of political criticism in books; for in a sense all criticism of India is at present inevitably political. It is on the nature of this criticism that I offer a final reflection. It may take two shapes. There is the carefully guarded statement of the official and there is the care-free verdict of the observer. Again, in the latter classification we watch the tendency either to unqualified condemnation or praise. This I believe to be a symbol of the changing status of India. In contemporary European criticism the work of Douglas Reed supplies an analogy. In the past, when British domination was supreme, criticism was diplomatic and under-emphasis was the fashion. It was hardly fair play to hit something which couldn't or didn't hit back; while criticism of the Administration would have been dangerously near to treason! But if a critic, from the day he lands, regards himself as free to record his impressions without worrying whether he gives offence to either India or Britain, it is clear that he is entering a country with the substance of an independent outlook. *Verdict on India* is the type of book which might equally well have been written on a first visit to China, Russia, Mexico or any other country. But it certainly could never have been written of the India of the nineteenth century or the Morley-Minto Reforms.

The lesson is that a nation in the making must take the rough with the smooth, for the very divergences of views which may be expressed are but symptoms of its changing status. For myself I still keep an eye on diplomacy. To be honest, I do so with no real regrets, though, as I implied at the beginning, I believe a basis of facing truth objectively to be the only one on which a writer can set out a work of any permanent value. There are ways and means of recording truth and my endeavour is only to protect truth gracefully, for I have far too many friends in India whom I should hate to offend and whom I know have discrimination sufficient to survive any lapse of good manners.

## CHAPTER XXI

## ART, CULTURE AND COBWEBS

TRAVELLERS RECORD THAT THE DEEPEST AND MOST FUNDAMENTAL impression which they register in traversing the Continent is that of contrast. There is great wealth and abject poverty. There is the highest intelligence and abysmal ignorance. There is physical excellence alongside stunted malnutrition; and above all there is beauty and ugliness.

It is refreshing to turn from the tension and animosities of controversy to a land of past imagination; to linger for moments in tradition of romantic breath and achievement. We readily admit that many of the spectacular architects of world history were in fact monsters of cruelty and repression and India has certainly been no exception. As the eye feasts on vast edifices of rock and sandstone, an indulgent mind wisely forgets the abject conditions of toil and blood which produced them. The evil which men do does often not live after them, and history is tolerant to its tyrants when they pass on the evidence of their tyrannies in the form of monuments for which there is neither the skill nor the labour of achievement in modern times.

If sheer human endeavour could gauge æsthetic value then the great Kailasa temple at Ellora is certainly India's most remarkable monument.<sup>1</sup> Twice I have gazed at the tangled mass of exuberant sculpture carved from the solid hill-side. It has impressed me more than any temple I have seen in the East. It is a comparatively simple process to place stone upon stone, carving to a planned design as the structure rises. But this is a case of massive splendour and wealth of detail by excavation and the chisel's application to a bare mountain-side.

The satisfaction of the Ajanta Caves<sup>2</sup> nearby is of a different nature. Our thoughts are with the lives of the men who created them rather than with the cave temples themselves. We contemplate an oasis of mental peace set in the cup of a quiet hill-side and we envy the sheltered days of the monks who over long periods laboured to create perhaps the finest mural paintings of all time. Indeed, the influence of the Ajanta discovery has been profound in directing modern Indian painting and dancing; too profound perhaps, since it seems to have monopolized endeavour at the expense of any urge to originality. Thus it is that modern India flatters her Buddhist ancestors by reproducing the Ajanta designs on café and cinema walls in Bombay; and very effective they are too!

Alas, the art and artisanship of India to-day is a travesty of the past, a state of affairs for which the British connection is sometimes blamed.

<sup>1</sup> Excavated in about the eighth century by a Hindu King, Krishna I. Dedicated to Shiva.

<sup>2</sup> Buddhist caves dating from the second century B.C. to the sixth century A.D. For many hundreds of years they remained covered and unknown until discovered by a party of sappers working in the area.

There is an Indian proverb: "Natch na jana angan tera,"<sup>1</sup> which is I think an effective comment on the accusation. It is a case of "Qui s'excuse, s'accuse." So far as architecture is concerned we certainly seem to have left the worst traditions of our land lying in various corners of the country. But that is hardly the intended interpretation of the charge against us. Indeed, had we smothered the landscape with an imported style of tasteful Georgian country houses and cottages for the Indian people, it might truly be said that we were stifling the development of indigenous invention. But we have done no such thing; and instead an observer is appalled at the hideous little structures erected everywhere to house the great army of the bureaucracy. There are a few old thick-walled mud bungalows with thatched roofs still to be found in scattered stations and they and New Delhi represent our only architectural impositions of importance on India. Those old bungalows did keep the heat out, whereas now we must live in small brick furnaces built without any trace of style either borrowed from the past or from the modern geometrical tendency.

New Delhi will I believe endure. A layman cannot criticize with confidence the wisdom of asking two architects of different methods to co-operate in creating the foundations of a city. I have watched it grow since the day I bumped down the Kingsway on a horse in 1921 in escort to the Prince of Wales for the opening ceremony. Like many others I have come now to accept the central plan which is spoken of as "the battle of styles." If our ideas of symmetry are not satisfied there is at least space and permanence; perhaps the one tangible piece of evidence in Indian history of a fateful era which will greet the tourist of the next millennium. Even in this newest of garden cities nature's attack is never very far and I have seen a jackal run across the façade of the great secretarial palaces. That was in the days when four marble ghost-like Viceroys looked down on the ebb and flow of Rolls-Royces and bicycles and bullock carts below. There was usually a pigeon perched on one of their scalps to soften our suitable sense of humility.

The fault I find with Delhi is that it lacks the atmosphere of a capital city. We miss neon lighting and cafés opening on to the streets. We ask in vain for an art gallery or a museum. There are no night haunts or theatres or any of the foibles of relaxation. There are only the trappings of drab Government and a ring of shops at Connaught Place and a shambles of unordered bazaars. There are the great monuments, of course, and the Jama Masjid stands as a princess in the midst of a crowd of common prostitutes.

The gravest omission is that here in the heart of India, round which lies the scattered history of 2,000 years, there is yet no national museum to house countless treasures of dynasties rich in colour and splendour. I submit that, as a serious contribution to the future nationhood of India, the British could in no more worthy manner hand to posterity the evidence of their part in the great Indian drama than by leaving behind in the

<sup>1</sup> Literally the words of a dancing girl complaining of the unevenness of the floor. Hence its English equivalent "A bad workman quarrels with his tools."

capital a vast storehouse of Indian culture where rich and poor would alike receive welcome and in which would be mirrored a complete picture of the past; archæology, architecture, art and craftsmanship collected in ordered display in dedication to the future of a united India.

Is this really just idle speculation? The thought first came to me years ago when I wandered through the great agricultural museum in Budapest. Hungary is not a very progressive country. Yet here was its national industry displayed for its citizens in the most careful and minute tabulation. I thought then how appropriate it would be if India, of all countries, could enjoy similar expression of her essential nature.

To-day crores of rupees are contemplated for reconstruction. There will presumably be talk of a tangible monument to the Indian sacrifice in lives for peace and security. The hurried erection of a litter of hideous offices and Government accommodation all over Delhi, which will presumably be pulled down after the war, constitutes a great opportunity. These are but hints for those whose privilege and power it is to initiate not only measures of evident utility but also less tangible yet enduring projects of imagination.

The Westerner who seeks to apply the European approach to the arts in India is doomed to disappointment. If you walk into one home in a thousand and find a picture by an Indian artist, or even a reproduction, you will be lucky. There is no search for beauty. Instead there is a national instinct which is both simple and crude. It consists in concentrating as much colour and design into the square foot as is possible. Artistic success is a matter of getting your money's worth! It is the old story of the quick return. A picture is beautiful because it is highly coloured and contains a wealth of accurate detail. A room is beautiful if it contains many such pictures. The effect can be enhanced by adding bric-à-brac of all sorts in a manner which would have gladdened the hearts of our grandmothers. I once saw a Maharaja's drawing-room decorated with a dado of hundreds of china receptacles more familiarly located under the bed! A Prince's home must dazzle the eye with lace-like columns and countless minarets. This was excellent in the days when kings could command and a thousand hands would obey; before also scientific knowledge had held out its modern embarrassment of mental diversion. In such a setting painters, decorators and masons could develop their professions throughout their lives to unparalleled standards of excellence; and only thus were such wonders as the Taj Mahal of Moslem art and the jewelled pendant of the ceiling of the Jain temple at Mount Abu achieved.

But what of modern times? In the West science has been applied to assist artistic invention. In architecture this means that no architect need suffer from a shortage of labour. In mass production methods we may miss the human touch with which the generations of an Italian renaissance enriched their surroundings. But we can and do achieve mass symmetry with full scope for originality of design. In the East the achievements of forced labour at the command of imaginative autocrats ceased with the era of British India, save where the symptoms still



linger on in a few of the richer States. The general effect in architecture is that the towns are littered with many thousands of flimsy pretentious little villas with ornate imitative façades of a few inches deep. There is no shortage of cheap bricks which crumble after a couple of monsoons; and thus has grown up that drab untendered outline of decaying hovels which everywhere greets the eye as one walks round an Indian city.

Mr. Beverley Nichols has attacked the silhouette of Bombay's Marine Drive with its storied rows of close-set cement verandas facing the sea. Certainly the countless blocks of flats drawn up like soldiers on parade are hardly in the best of taste and when the proud owners emerge in the evening to boast their ownership in easy chairs from their low-roofed cement cages we are reminded of a vast human zoo! But even this garish vulgarity satisfies the normal Westerner whose eye is tuned to neatness in the landscape. It is sad to reflect that, as the price of a moderate realization of rational social conditions, India has had to sacrifice the passing of so much artistic achievement.

I have already challenged the charge that this is in any way due to British influence. My own inclination is to an admission that only in the sphere of literature have we been aggressive. I recall a picture of the students of Lahore University enjoying the shade of the trees of the Lawrence Gardens with their minds deep in the study of Shakespeare, Tennyson and Oliver Goldsmith. Yet even in this era Tagore flourished in Bengal.

Sometimes in the East a Western mind misses the ever-constant vigorous invention of art expression in Europe. Our make-up is not always that of the traditional pioneer with a rifle over his shoulder and a flask of whisky in his pocket; nor is all soldiery rough and unimaginative. Once in the middle of a hot summer in a frontier post in the Bhattani country near Bannu I picked up an English weekly paper and studied a surrealist picture of the head of a pretty girl popping out of some seaweed in front of a ruined Greek temple. There are times when one welcomes even the pure absurdities of Western experiment.

The art of painting is certainly not neglected; but the faculty of appreciation, as understood in the West, does not exist. I speak without much authority; but I have the impression that painting is largely concerned with imitating the pale soft outlines of the Bengal School of Tagore.

In December 1944 I visited the exhibition of the Art Society of India in Bombay. I bought an expensive catalogue and was immediately prejudiced to find that only about a quarter of the pictures were entered and there was no attempt to number pictures consecutively. My purchase was in fact not a catalogue at all. I also noted that the annual Patel trophy, apparently the Nobel prize equivalent for Indian art, was won by the President of the exhibition. In several cases good pictures had dirty thumb-marks on the mountings. But for all that, there were some fine pictures and I would much have liked to have taken away Mr. S. H. Raza's sunlit *Nasik Market*. Mr. Raza has a bold translucent technique in contrast to the pale colours so often associated with Indian painting.

The most arresting pictures I ever saw were not by an Indian. They were the work of Professor Roerich,<sup>1</sup> scientist, philosopher and artist, who, after a life of international reputation, now lives in serene obscurity in the beautiful Kulu valley in Northern India. At the Bombay Art Exhibition of 1939 he monopolized one room with the most amazing creations, riots of colour and design, mostly of vast mountain spaces relieved by slight human touches. I was not surprised to hear later that he had designed some striking scenic sets for Wagner's *Ring*.

For several years in Lahore a most remarkable and beautiful girl, Amrita Sher Gil,<sup>2</sup> stimulated interest in painting. Her father, Umrao Singh, was a sturdy Sikh Sardar and her mother was a Hungarian. She studied for six years in Paris and returned to India in 1934 where her beauty, talent and personality quickly caught the imagination of artistic circles all over India. She had studied in Florence and Paris where she exhibited in the Salon, coming much under the influence of Gauguin. On her return to India a change seems to have come over her not only in painting but in her general approach to life. Appalled at the poverty and dire distress of thousands of her fellow-creatures, she poured an overwhelming response into her pictures; and in depicting the mute suffering of India with the affinities of Gauguin and Cezanne to guide her one can well imagine that pictures of great inspiration resulted. She continued to work and paint in India, exhibiting in Bombay, Delhi, Lahore, Simla and elsewhere, until she died suddenly in Lahore in 1941. Had she lived she would undoubtedly have succeeded in rejuvenating activity in painting all over the country. With her national sympathies and appreciation of Indian art she brought from the West all the freedom and vigour of new standards of interpretation. Indeed it was her conviction that Indian art could and must go forward only under the stimulation of Western influence. I was not in Lahore when she was at the height of her fame and so never had the good fortune to meet her. But I have since met and talked with many of her friends and the memory of her work is to-day so very real that I have felt it right to add these lines in sincere tribute to a great artist.

Of Indian music I confess to a frustrated sense of misunderstanding. I do not for a moment accept Mr. Beverley Nichols's hint that there is nothing to understand, and it would be nearer the truth to say that there is nothing which we are capable of understanding. Certainly in rhythm there is more in it than meets the eye. I do not know what the time analysis of an Indian melody would look like if put into Western notation. But I do know that over a given period I sense a regular cycle of rhythm with a good deal of syncopation thrown in, and the players know well enough what they are about, for in plain language they all do the same thing! The real artists of the Indian orchestra therefore seem to me to be the damru and tabla players.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Prof. Nicholas Roerich. Established Roerich Museum, New York. Vice-President, Archaeological Institute of America, Order of Imperial Russia of St. Stanislaus, French Legion of Honour, etc.

<sup>2</sup> In 1938 she made a brief visit to Hungary and married her cousin, Mr. Victor Egan.

<sup>3</sup> Drums. The former shaped like a sand-glass, the latter like a small barrel.

The late Maharaja of Mysore was once kind enough to have some Indian music written out for me in the Western notation; but I confess that I could only discover rather normal melodies with no harmony to relieve the monotonous effect of the missing element. It is hardly appropriate to speak of instrumental music because I know there is a great technical science built up round such instruments as the vina and the sarangi. But the lack of the resources of our Western orchestras has generally circumscribed the Indian power of expression, which may explain why rhythm, which is not dependent on the commercial manufacture of highly technical instruments, has flourished beyond comprehension, while in melody the thin pale tones of a few stringed instruments have to suffice to express grief, joy, grandeur, mystery and all the abstract reactions for which we employ a whole battery of strings, wind and percussion. Cyril Scott suggests that there may be an explanation of all this in national character and climatic effect.<sup>1</sup>

So far from Indian music being a hoax its technique is apparently complex beyond Western comprehension. I read that of the 72 possible scale combinations we in the West use 3, while in India they use 20. I read also that there are 35 Indian time signatures which include times of 5, 7, 10 and 14 beats in the bar; that Indian music is written in quarter-tones and that one whole book of the Vedas, the Sama Veda, is devoted to music. All this is very impressive. But there is one point I cannot fathom. We are told on the one hand that there is an immense store of musical invention too elaborate for untutored Western consumption. In contrast we are also told that music has been mainly transmitted by the ear from father to son throughout the ages. I find it difficult to reconcile a highly complicated regulating mechanism with an art which has been handed down and developed by natural processes based on principles of tradition.

The music of the West is based on the test of the concert room. The music of the East is based on the temple and the demands of the concert room are unknown. To understand Indian music one should understand the whole range of the Hindu religious system, and the flute of Krishna has a deeper significance than the harp of Orpheus. Indian music is therefore not an isolated art but is part of a system, and as such I doubt if you or I will ever find æsthetic comfort in it. Apparently the music of Scriabin is the only Western expression in sympathy with Oriental music.

To illustrate the kind of thing we are up against, let me quote from an author who has gone deeply into the subject:—<sup>2</sup>

"There is in India a whole school of devotees who look on music as a transcendental subject and who use the medium of sound for the attainment of eternal bliss. These are of two cults, the Gnanayogins and the Geeta Bhaktayogins. The former use the Pranavopasana and the latter the Geetopasana. . . . They (the former) believe

<sup>1</sup> *Music. Its social influence throughout the ages.* Chapter XXVII. By Cyril Scott.

<sup>2</sup> *The Music of Orient and Occident.* By Margaret E. Cousins.

therefore that all sound is divine in nature and that through the efficacy of sound, especially musical sound, mankind can achieve self-realization, in other words, identity with the cosmic self, Samadhi, 'the constantly realized blissful state.' "

Well, well! All that is very formidable and I am afraid rather above my head. My own prejudice is for music which satisfies on its merit and which is not mixed up in a system of life. Let us leave it at that.

I feel on safer ground when I attack the ladies and gentlemen who correspond to our operatic stars. We should realize that the dancing girl by virtue of her profession also takes on a commitment to sing; and it so happens that whereas she can usually move her body, arms, hands and even fingers with consummate grace, she cannot necessarily sing. Indeed I have never known what constituted a good or bad singer; and I had to return to our old conclusion of quantity defeating quality. He or she who makes the loudest noise is the best singer. Since the noise is made usually through the nose it is hardly an æsthetic sound. Even so, I prefer this unsophisticated superlative of effort to some of the degenerate meaningless screaming of the saxophone which, when set against a monotonous background of drums in some form of tango tempo, passes as "swing music." This, to me, is just sheer physical pain.

It was a delight in Bombay to encounter a taste for Western music which found expression in a modest orchestra and much chamber music. But the inevitable bickerings which always surround the organization of music were as evident in Bombay as they have been in London. I was on the Orchestral Committee and saw something of these rivalries and jealousies, all the fiercer because those concerned were usually teaching and the defamation of a music teacher might, with the limited demand, mean a fall in his or her clientèle with a serious loss in income. Mehli Mehta was our leader in the orchestra and he is familiar to all those who pass through the Taj Hotel. Years of having to play lunch-time music have, alas, monopolized his talent. But I have heard many of the famous ones of the day and Mehta play the Mendelssohn Concerto and as a layman I have found it difficult to tell the difference in his performance. He is certainly the finest instrumentalist in the East.

Our conductor was a Belgian, Jules Craen, with an amazing capacity for sitting up till midnight adjusting full scores to the limited resources of our 50-piece orchestra. He was an ardent disciple of the French masters, so that over a number of years Bombay has now been thoroughly dosed in Chabrier, Charpentier, Fauré, Ravel and others. This was refreshing after many years of homage to the three "B's." Madame Craen, his wife, was a Goanese girl with brilliant ability at the piano; and she has by now treated Bombay to all the well-known piano concertos.

On Indian dancing I am silent. I realize that here is an Indian possession which is thoroughly national in its appeal and which must make a real æsthetic contribution in the international world of art. There is grace down to the last ripple in a dancer's fingers; and I only hope

that London will one day have another chance of seeing Uday Shankar<sup>1</sup> and his company and Ram Gopal. I believe Uday Shankar has had for the present to break up his school at Almora. But I trust this is only a temporary exigency.

Personally I would like to see an Indian Minister of Fine Arts with a national theatre; with subsidies to enterprises in the happier national expressions of art or craftsmanship or any of the neglected æsthetic attachments which yet carry a consciousness of nationhood.

I seem to have introduced the Western taste and point of view rather aggressively into this glance round at India's comparative artistic sterility. My full agreement is with those who believe that India can again live up to her artistic heritage only by turning to the West for energy and inspiration. This is certainly the case in an expression of art in which India is desperately striving for recognition and success. I refer to the cinema.

Once again, I do not think Mr. Beverley Nichols has painted a fair picture of the Indian cinema industry and he little realizes the handicaps of climate and social limitation under which it has laboured. Until quite recently no girl of any caste or social standing would have had the courage to take to the cinema profession.

I first went to Indian pictures when I was working for a language interpretership, since the quality of Urdu spoken is impeccable. In those days production and technique were far behind Western standards. Films were too long and too loud. Humour was repeated until it became humourless. In fact, as always, the appreciation of quantity rather than quality dictated the standard which producers fed to the public.

To-day the public have become more discriminating. They see the slick productions of the West<sup>2</sup> and they are demanding something more than hours of monotonous clowning. Films such as *Sikandar* or *Kadamburi* or *Station-master* show a great advance both in spectacular production and dramatic sense. There is still much inefficient technique and there are climatic difficulties of processing which cannot be obviated.

There are on the whole two types of films. First there is the modern story of domestic life. This type has never quite settled down. It must borrow its background from the West and fit the plan of the Western mode of life on to the more sophisticated elements of the Eastern pattern. Such films are a true mirror of what is happening in modern India. If anything, they are setting the pace and one day soon a kiss on the screen will cease to send orthodox families into hysterics. The majority of these films are comedies. The other class of film is the historical film. Here the wealth of background is illimitable; but alas, it is always either a Hindu or Moslem background! I cannot for instance see the Prabhat Film Company ever producing a picture centred round the life of Akbar.

Before I left Bombay I asked a kind friend, Mr. Thapur of the *Times of India*, to choose a film for me. I had rather hoped to see *Draupaid*,

<sup>1</sup> In 1943 Uday Shankar was offered a million dollars to appear in a film by Metro Goldwyn Mayer.

<sup>2</sup> *The Song of Bernadette* was in its seventh week when I last passed through Bombay.

featuring a stunning beauty called Shushila Rani. Eventually we went to *Ramshastri*, a story of the era of the great Peshwas of the Maharashtra. "This type of film appeals to a national sense of frustration," said Thapur quite simply and rather sadly. I refrained from the obvious comment over the nationality. Yet I realized exactly what he meant. Sitting around in the audience were respectable Gujrati families, obviously absorbed in the story. The film was quite excellent. The theme, the integrity and incorruptibility of a Peshwa's Minister of Justice, was, I reflected, of much more use to the Indian public than the antics of the Marx brothers. I came away impressed with the strides that Indian films had made in the last ten years. The film industry has won through the cobweb stage which has beset other manifestations of artistic endeavour, and is set for a rich expansion if it will borrow wisely from America and Europe in technical matters.

My dictionary defines art as the "Use or employment of things to answer some special purpose"; and so I feel justified in touching on two features either of which is subject for ample academic research. The reader may now expect something fairly formidable. But in all seriousness, I am thinking only of jewellery and—believe it or not—cooking! The Bond Street jewellers have little to teach India in the matter of design, for they encounter an indigenous craft which is appreciated in the lowest hamlet. Wander round the stalls at any of the great fairs in the Himalaya foothills and you will understand my meaning. India is the one country in which the term "cheap jewellery" is not synonymous with "bad jewellery."

In the matter of cooking, if you want a good meal, invite yourself to dinner with any big Sardar and ask for pillau, kabab, sag, pakauras or paratras and you will be quite certain to come away with that uncomfortable consciousness of having overeaten. The more fastidious homes serve these delicacies in innumerable little bowls on a tray with one tray for each guest. Personally I am quite at home with the mass production methods which I so frequently encountered when one is not limited to the small cubic content of the bowl!

## CHAPTER XXII

### PEOPLE AND OPINIONS

I WAS ONCE AGAIN BACK IN BOMBAY AND MR. BANNERJEE, THE FRIENDLY manager of the Taj, had miraculously found me a room. I had left Delhi and the kind and ever-constant hospitality of Sir Firoz Khan Noon and had travelled to Karachi, coming down to Bombay by sea in a small French cargo boat in luxurious comfort. What a strange interlude; in the middle of a war when sea travel all over the world was a nightmare, to have three days in a ship in complete peace with a cabin to myself, excellent French food, good English beer and one other

voyager to share it with. My companion was a young High Church Army chaplain and he explained Church administration to me in return for stories about India.

But what a change had come over the city. A seething mass of soldiers and sailors roamed the streets, and a thousand street booths had sprung up all over the pavements selling haberdashery of every description from the new factories of India. India had stepped in where Japan had walked out; and quite right too. But it didn't lend much conviction to the traditional picture of Western exploitation.

The cobra man was still by the Gateway of India and I suppose his great-grandson will be there fifty years hence! So I reflected, watching him from behind the comfort of the great windows of the hotel which look out over the harbour. But there was little time for casual reflection, for when you have almost at a moment's notice to pack up and leave a family and close the associations of twenty-five years, there is much to be done in the way of visits to the bank and the agents, and in war-time, last but not least, the censor.

*I had a good deal of stuff to interest our apprehensive vigilants in Bombay, for I was taking home a mass of material to work on for my book; pamphlets, articles and Press cuttings. They somehow managed to make me feel as if I was doing something very wicked, although they did eventually let everything pass.*

Life suddenly produced quite a number of mild surprises. One came to me outside the Frere Hall in the gardens at Karachi, when I realized that all this time I had never taken in what happens when a man sells pān and beetal leaf. Here was a process which went on at every bazaar street corner in the country and I really had never noticed it or the technique which went with it. Another surprise came when, walking past a Bombay piano shop, I found a private soldier playing the César Franck symphonic variations!

By the same glass window I sat and wrote a few last letters to my family, to friends and others, to perhaps my oldest friend in the country, Brinda Kapurthala. It is curiously remiss of me to have come thus far in my story of India and not to have spoken of her before, for she certainly deserves attention. Born and nurtured in the little Rajput Hill State of Jubbal and raised in all the nursery orthodoxy of ancient conservatism with Brahman priests attending daily to the family prayers and meals a matter of drill, she finished her education in France and returned to India to marry the Tikka Raja of Kapurthala in as magnificent a wedding as the East could stage. From then on, she drifted about with the care-free artificial international crowd who decorated the Lido and the Riviera; but they never spoilt her and she has carried through life two qualities indispensable to her; her Rajput spirit and a sense of fun. The former lifts her free of the palace intrigue which attaches to every major State in India, while the second makes her the best company in the world. She still insists on the infallibility of horoscopes, but with it she has become prone to reflective moods on the meaning of the Bhagavad Gita, and with the passing of time she has become highly sensitive to

the serious problems of the world. Brinda Kapurthala has three lovely daughters. Shushila and Mumila have both married young men in the forces and have families. But Indira, the eldest, has made an independent life for herself outside India and broadcasts to her country with considerable success from the B.B.C. on a variety of subjects.

And what a chance in a country like India for the Radio, if they give it money and exploit it properly. I had known Mr. Bokhari<sup>1</sup> who now directs the Delhi station since the days when we had both been members of the little Minerva Club in Lahore. He had then been teaching English at the Government College, a language which he knows far more about than I do myself!

I should hate to judge an order of merit of brain capacity in a great country like India as some have attempted. You can not assess brains as you can engines on their horse-power. But I would say that Bokhari is one of the quickest and most expressive thinking machines in the country, and under his direction the All-India Radio should develop on imaginative lines if they give it the money. I gather that at present it lacks the foolproof efficiency in matters of detailed routine which one associates with an established organization such as the B.B.C. Bokhari's ideas for the future are based on the principle of decentralization. Local traditions play their part and everywhere find expression in folk-song, dancing and poetry. You could, for instance, find no more individual village culture than is expressed in the old Jat country songs to be heard at any fair in the Rohtak country. All these local loyalties could be developed for the entertainment of rural India on a basis of decentralization, with regional stations on a provincial scale and rural stations perhaps on a scale of fifty or sixty in the country. Stations would all be linked by land line so that an important pronouncement of All-India interest could be made at any moment from any corner in the country, a process at present impossible without a cumbersome link-up to Delhi.

To these principles I should like to add my own vague inclination which would be to establish a receiving set on the fixed Government wave-length in every village in the country. If this was too ambitious then a start could be made by distribution on a *zail* basis, with the Zaildar responsible for the custody of the set. There will be formidable technical difficulties, for at present electric power is not distributed on anything like a sufficient scale to be able to connect receiving stations to a grid system. To me it seems, however, that the alternative, the establishment of central battery-charging stations, would be possible. Here there should surely be scope for the employment of ex-soldiers on some scale who would be responsible for the maintenance of sets and the collection, charging and redistribution of batteries.

But alongside the playing up of loyalties to local interests should, I think, be set a programme of an All-India nature, mingling its lessons with the news of the world outside and a broad education ever so discreetly, yet with persistence. Let the people of the country-side by all means

<sup>1</sup> S. A. Bokhari. Not to be confused with his brother, Z. A. Bokhari, who works in England on the Indian section at the B.B.C.



have their fun. Give them also the local gossip, the grain prices and everything which falls under the heading of parish pump politics. But with their meal let them also take their medicine. That, I think, is their obligation to India.

S. A. Bokhari is, I suppose, as fair an example as one could find of an Oriental who has taken from England the best which it could offer and given it back to his country. In doing so he has worked away on an entirely practical plane concerned with the everyday administration of life.

From a type we all well enough recognize and understand I would turn to a rarer and more mystic son of India and draw attention for a moment to a man who is unquestionably the greatest Indian of the day, if not of all time. I wonder how many Englishmen have heard of him. He is Sri Aurobindo Ghose, a recluse who lives in Pondicherry, in an Ashram of his own making with about 170 disciples. I can only tell the story of Aurobindo Ghose in a paragraph and leave it for those who care to, to search out the rest for themselves. They will find it difficult, for there is no organized publicity and Press for one who lives half-way between the world of reality and the world of the spirit.

Aurobindo Ghose was born in Bengal in 1872. At the age of seven he, with his two brothers, came to England where he was educated first at St. Paul's School and later at King's College, Cambridge, taking a senior scholarship and tripos in the first division. Languages came to him as a fish learns to swim and he mastered Greek and Latin, French, German and Italian. He then passed into the Indian Civil Service but I understand was disqualified for failing to appear for his riding test! Returning to India in 1893 he served as Vice-Principal of Baroda College and devoted his spare time to Sanskrit. In 1906 he became the Principal of a new National College in Bengal and was soon inevitably caught up in the whole complexity of the political machine, coming under the leadership of the late Mr. B. G. Tilak. There followed five years of stormy rebellion. Long before the Congress adopted complete independence as its goal Ghose was preaching it in Bengal. In 1907 extremist Congress elements organized a national conference and Ghose was elected as its President. In the meanwhile he was spreading the doctrine of revolution through the medium of his paper *Bande Mataram* which he edited. Such a career could only lead in one direction and in 1908 Aurobindo was arrested following the arrest in 1907 of his brother Barindra as an anarchist.

There followed a year in jail and his release. For two years there was then a mental struggle which had started in jail: "I looked at the jail that secluded me from men and it was no longer by its high walls that I was imprisoned." In April 1910 he sailed for Pondicherry in French India beyond the long arm of the law of British India which had already issued a warrant for his rearrest. In Pondicherry he set up his Ashram and for 24 years he has devoted himself to a life of the spirit. It was not so much a case of complete renunciation, because apparently for some time the cause of Indian nationalism and the fact

that his own particular movement died without his leadership disturbed him greatly. But by demonstrating the spiritual values latent in India to the world he considered that his country would achieve a greater spiritual freedom through which political freedom would inevitably be won. In some ways his teaching is the Gandhian teaching cleared of much of the confusion in which it is trapped and divorced from all direct political dogma and action.

Aurobindo Ghose may be said to have found the complete synthesis between Eastern and Western thought. He discards the radical view of Hindu philosophy which finds ultimate salvation in rejecting life on this earth as an illusion. Yet he is equally convinced that material life unilluminated by the radiance of the spirit could never be the goal of human evolution. He hovers between two worlds. Aurobindo's philosophy is set out in his most important work, *Essays on the Gita*. As I understand it, his teaching is imparted entirely through his writings. His own disciples seldom see him and to the public he makes his appearance only three or four times a year. This teaching through silence is sometimes not understood in the West, and the importance which still attaches to it in the East aptly illustrates the fundamental differences in approach between the two. It is not a subject we can profitably argue, for, where we do not understand, it is best to maintain silence.

Aurobindo Ghose's following is one of quality and not quantity. But his greatness will endure. It is of passing interest that he has regarded the present world dilemma as essentially of universal application and as a struggle of irreconcilable ideologies in which all are irrevocably involved. In Hindu mythology there is a story in the Mahabharata of Krishna having to urge the vacillating Arjuna to pick up his bow and fight for the soul of India. Ghose has accepted exactly this approach in his advice to modern India in regard to fascist ideology. Sometimes I wonder if we will not require such a man in the West after the war, for a peace based on material selfishness will be but a cessation of pulling the trigger. Peace is a state of mind and is not created by putting signatures to a document. I sometimes wonder too if we could not borrow a little from that other message from the East, the blind obedience of Islam.

It was my good fortune to take an Indian mission round the Middle East in 1943. We visited about 50,000 Indian troops, told them of conditions in India and took back news of the troops to their homes. I can remember being tied up at Aden alongside an old coal barge with its stream of ebony chanting figures carrying their grimy loads into the bowels of the ship till late at night. In my party was an Indian lawyer, a certain Khan Sahib Ghulam Rabbani, a gentleman of culture and kindly humour and a great asset to our party. Evening came and the call to prayer. I can see now the Khan Sahib immaculate in a white achkan with his prayer mat out on the lower deck on his knees and alongside him a couple of dusky Somali coolies from the coaling party in prostrated reverence to Mecca and the setting sun.

We were a curiously mixed bag on that occasion; for besides the Khan Sahib we had Captain Ajab Khan, an old gentleman smothered in medals, member of the Legislative Assembly and thoroughly at home with Ambassadors; while at the other end of the scale was a Gharwali Jemadar who found a knife and fork a constant problem. We left India as a mission of "distinguished Indian gentlemen"; but our status rapidly fell and we soon became "the Indian mission." Finally, the Embarkation Staff Officer at Basra inquired if I was in charge of the "Concert Party"!

India is a land of paradox, which I think is one of its attractions. There is always a surprise and if you start to become too logical or critical you will miss much of its charm. Not that I believe in taking everything at its face value. A very important English official once wrote of a Maharaja:—

"He is one of the very ablest of the ruling Princes of India and his State is run on very up-to-date lines. . . . His roads, public works, gardens, schools, barracks and sporting preserves are all of the very best. He takes a really intelligent interest in the antiquities and history of his State."

A few years later the Maharaja was removed from his State for gross and cruel maladministration!

That is not the kind of innocence which I had in mind. But when I find a rich Indian merchant, who is more at home in the capitals of Europe than the capitals of India, calling in a Brahman priest at five o'clock in the morning to fill the flat with heavy incense and the chanting of mantras in order to bless a new commercial enterprise, I confess I am still surprised. I confess too I was surprised when I walked into the little Raja of Kalsia's faded old palace in the middle of the jungle and found a diploma for dancing awarded on the French Riviera hanging alongside his many tiger-skins. Apart from being an excellent shikari he is incidentally also a qualified air pilot!

Well, I am afraid some of the things which surprise will have to be conquered if the India whose voice is mute is to be given coherent expression: and that there is a young India eager to remove them I have not the slightest doubt. If I could presume to speak to the youth of India I would say: Go forward. But march with your heads as well as your hearts. Your country is a vast crucible in which you yourselves will soon test out the greatest of all experiments. The ingredients are there for you to choose and to mix. Your responsibility will be great. But so will be your opportunity. Give of yourselves; take too what the world has to give; and good luck go with you.

This chapter purported to speak of people and their opinions. But it seems to have gone astray; and so I may legitimately close with a last tribute to a community who hold few opinions. They are the Mr. Smiths and Browns of India. I shall long remember the best of friends, Mr. Mehta, the station-master of Jullundur, with five daughters to keep

on about two hundred rupees a month. How indeed could he afford opinions? The Government was his bread and butter and if the Government went he and his world went with it. Yet goodness knows, in his supreme patience, courtesy and quiet efficiency, if any man in the country deserved his opinions, he did.

So did all those others whom he represented, the great bureaucracy who still drive the machine while others "make great argument."

To these too I say in all profound sincerity: good luck go with you.

## ADDENDUM

Since this book was completed the war has come to an end and the Indian political scene is fast changing. I closed on a note of high hope for the future. In the meanwhile, Pundit Nehru has referred to the British Empire as a "fading unit"; this at a time when any wandering citizen of Central Europe gladly accepts a British passport. But the point is that this is hardly the language of negotiation for either a future Dominion or independent State.

I wish to thank Mr. Robert Stimson, who gave me help in connection with the publication of the book in India.

The photographs entitled "Governor's Bodyguard, Bombay," "The Dhobi" and "Indian India" were taken by my wife.

## APPENDIX I

## SOME FACTS AND FIGURES

(1) *Currency.*

12 Pies	=	1 Anna
16 Annas	=	1 Rupee (= 1s. 6d.)
Rs. 100,000	=	1 Lakh (= £7,520)
Rs. 100 Lakhs	=	1 Crore (= £752,000)

(2) *Population.* (Figures to the nearest 100,000.)

Total 389,000,000 in 1941 (increase of 50,000,000 in 10 years).

Composed of { 296,000,000 British India.  
93,000,000 Indian States.

In British India the main communities are composed as under:—

Hindus	..	..	255,000,000 <sup>1</sup>
Moslems	..	..	94,500,000
Christians	..	..	7,250,000
Sikhs	..	..	5,750,000
Jains	..	..	1,500,000
Buddhists	..	..	230,000
Parsees	..	..	115,000
Tribal communities			25,000,000

(3) *Education.*

(a) Before the war Britain spent the equivalent of Rs. 33-2-0 per head of the population on education. In India the comparable expenditure was Rs. 0-8-9 per head.

(b) Less than one out of every four children stay long enough at school to reach the fourth class, the earliest stage at which permanent literacy is reached. 80 per cent of the money spent on primary education is therefore wasted.

(c) Out of a total of 3,861 High Schools 2,310 are located in urban areas, although these areas represent only one-tenth of the total population.

(4) *Health.*

(a) The "expectation of life" figure in India is 27. In England it is 63.

(b) The death rate in India is 22.4 per 1,000. In England it is 12.4.

(c) There is one doctor to every 10,000 of the population in India. There is one doctor to every 1,000 of the population in England.

(d) There is one nurse to every 56,000 of the population in India. There is one nurse to every 3,000 of the population in England.

<sup>1</sup> Includes Scheduled Castes, 49,000,000.

(5) *Economics.*

The present *per capita* income (1942-43) is estimated at Rs. 114 per annum.

The minimum *per capita* income, at present prices, to ensure the bare requirements of life (food, clothing, housing, medical relief, education) has been estimated at Rs. 267 per annum.

(6) *Agricultural.*

(a) The yield of rice per acre in Japan is 1.61 tons.

The yield of rice per acre in India is 0.35 tons.

The yield of wheat per acre in Canada is 0.52 tons.

The yield of wheat per acre in India is 0.32 tons.

The yield of sugar cane per acre in Java is 54.91 tons.

The yield of sugar cane per acre in India is 12.66 tons.

(b) There are about 680,000,000 acres of land in India, of which 281,000,000 acres are sown, 154,000,000 acres are cultivable waste, 155,000,000 acres are uncultivable and 90,000,000 acres are forests.

(7) *Indian War Casualties.* (Up to February, 1945.)

Killed	..	..	..	17,363
Wounded	..	..	..	45,906
Missing	..	..	..	13,543
Prisoners of war	..	..	..	52,998
Believed prisoners of war				22,036

## APPENDIX II

THE DRAFT DECLARATION BROUGHT BY SIR STAFFORD CRIPPS TO INDIA,  
APRIL 1942.

"His Majesty's Government, having considered the anxieties expressed in this country and in India, as to the fulfilment of promises made in regard to the future of India, have decided to lay down in precise and clear terms the steps which they propose shall be taken for the earliest possible realization of self-government in India. The object is the creation of a new Indian Union which shall constitute a Dominion, associated with the United Kingdom and other Dominions by a common allegiance to the Crown, but equal to them in every respect, in no way subordinate in any aspect of its domestic and external affairs.

"His Majesty's Government, therefore, make the following declaration:—

"(a) Immediately upon cessation of hostilities steps shall be taken to set up in India, in the manner described hereafter, an elected body charged with the task of framing a new constitution for India.

"(b) Provision shall be made, as set out below, for participation of Indian States in the constitution-making body.

"(c) His Majesty's Government undertake to accept and implement forthwith the constitution so framed subject only to:—

"(i) The right of any province of British India, that is not prepared to accept the new constitution, to retain its present constitutional position, provision being made for its subsequent accession if it so decides.

"With such non-acceding provinces, should they so desire, His Majesty's Government will be prepared to agree upon a new constitution, giving them the same full status as the Indian Union and arrived at by a procedure analogous to that here laid down.

"(ii) The signing of a treaty which shall be negotiated between His Majesty's Government and the constitution-making body. This treaty will cover all necessary matters arising out of the complete transfer of responsibility from British to Indian hands; it will make provision, in accordance with undertakings given by His Majesty's Government, for the protection of racial and religious minorities: but will not impose any restriction on the power of the Indian Union to decide in future its relationship to other member States of the British Commonwealth.



"Whether or not an Indian State elects to adhere to the constitution it will be necessary to negotiate a revision of its treaty arrangements so far as this may be required in the new situation.

"(d) The constitution-making body shall be composed as follows, unless the leaders of Indian opinion in the principal communities agree upon some other form before the end of hostilities:

"Immediately upon the result being known of provincial elections, which will be necessary at the end of hostilities, the entire membership of the lower houses of provincial legislatures shall, as a single electoral college, proceed to the election of the constitution-making body by the system of proportional representation. This new body shall be in number about one-tenth of the number of the electoral college.

"Indian States shall be invited to appoint representatives in the same proportion to their total population as in the case of representatives of British India as a whole and with the same powers as British Indian members.

"(e) During the critical period which now faces India, and until the new constitution can be framed, His Majesty's Government must inevitably bear the responsibility for and retain the control and direction of the defence of India as part of their world war effort, but the task of organizing to the full the military, moral and material resources of India must be the responsibility of the Government of India with the co-operation of the peoples of India. His Majesty's Government desire and invite the immediate and effective participation of the leaders of the principal sections of the Indian people in the counsels of their country, of the Commonwealth and of the United Nations. Thus they will be enabled to give their active and constructive help in the discharge of a task which is vital and essential for the future freedom of India."

## APPENDIX III

(a) LETTER OF THE SIKH DEPUTATION TO SIR STAFFORD CRIPPS. 31st March 1942.

May we begin by stating that after giving careful consideration to the proposals which have now been published, from the point of view of:—

- (1) India's integrity, and
- (2) The Sikh position,

we find them unacceptable because:—

(1) Instead of maintaining and strengthening the integrity of India, specific provision has been made for the separation of Provinces and the constitution of Pakistan and

(2) The cause of the Sikh community has been lamentably betrayed.

Ever since the British advent our community has fought for England in every battlefield of the Empire, and this is our reward that our position in the Punjab, which England promised to hold in trust, and in which we occupied a predominant position, has been finally liquidated.

Why should a province that fails to secure three-fifths majority of its legislature, in which a religious community enjoys a statutory majority, be allowed to hold a plebiscite and given the benefit of a bare majority? In fairness this right should have been conceded to communities who are in a permanent minority in the legislature.

Further, why should not the population of any area opposed to separation be given the right to record its verdict and to form an autonomous unit?

We are sure you know that the Punjab proper extended up to the banks of the Jhelum excluding the Jhang and Multan districts, and the trans-Jhelum area was added by the conquest of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and retained by the British for administrative convenience. It would be altogether unjust to allow the extraneous trans-Jhelum population which only accidentally came into the province to dominate the future of the Punjab proper.

We give below the figures which abundantly prove our contention:—

From the boundary of Delhi to the banks of the Ravi River the population is divided as follows:—

Muslims . . . . .	4,505,000
Sikhs and other non-Muslims . .	7,646,000

From the Delhi boundary to the banks of the Jhelum River excluding Multan and Jhang districts:—

Muslims . . . . .	8,288,000
Sikhs and other non-Muslims . .	9,348,000

To this may be added the population of the Sikh States of Patiala, Nabha, Jind, Kapurthala and Faridkot, which is about 25 lacs; of this the Muslims constitute barely 20 per cent and this reduces the ratio of the Muslim population still further.

We do not wish to labour the point any more. We have lost all hope of receiving any consideration. We shall resist however by all possible means the separation of the Punjab from the All-India Union. We shall never permit our motherland to be at the mercy of those who disown it.

(b) THE SIKH GURUS

	<i>Born</i>	<i>Guru</i>
Guru Nanak ..	1469	1538
Guru Angad ..	1504	1538-1552
Guru Amar Das ..	1509	1552-1574
Guru Ram Das ..	1534	1574-1581
Guru Arjan ..	1563	1581-1606
Guru Har Govind ..	1595	1606-1645
Guru Har Rai ..	1630	1645-1661
Guru Har Krishna ..	1656	1661-1664
Guru Tegh Bahadur	1622	1664-1675
Guru Govind Singh	1666	1675-1708

## APPENDIX IV

## THE CIVIL ADMINISTRATION

(1) *Lambardar*.—Village headman. Takes five per cent on water rates and land revenue, which he collects straight from zemindars in cash and deposits in the sub-Treasury, after receiving the details from the patwari twice a year at each harvest. The post is normally hereditary and might bring in a maximum of Rs. 600 per annum.

*Zaildar*.—In charge of 10 to 30 villages which compose a zail. The post is graded with fixed annual rates of pay for each grade. Appointments are normally made from among the lambardars concerned.

*Patwari*.—The village accountant and record-keeper. Measures up all land and enters records in the Mutation Register. Enters all changes of ownership due to death, etc. Pay Rs. 20 to Rs. 25 per month according to grade.

*Field kanungo*.—Superintends the work of 15 to 20 Patwaris.

*Naib Tehsildar*.—Works in a tehsil under the Tehsildar. In practice the tehsil is divided between them.

Acts as third-class Magistrate (Judicial) and Assistant Collector (Revenue).

Pay Rs. 80 to Rs. 150 per month according to grade.

*Tehsildar*.—In charge of a tehsil (approximately 150 villages).

Acts as second-class Magistrate (Judicial) and Assistant Collector (Revenue).

Pay Rs. 200 to Rs. 400 per month according to grade.

*Deputy Commissioner*.—In charge of a District of three to six Tehsils. Acts as first-class Magistrate (Judicial) and Collector (Revenue). A Deputy Commissioner (D.C.) may have as many as five Extra Assistant Commissioners (E.A.C.) to assist him. These would have duties as under:—

(a) E.A.C. (Sub-Divisional Officer). For a particularly large Tehsil.

(b) E.A.C. (Additional District Magistrate). In war time given a free hand to free the District Magistrate (D.C.) from Court work.

(c) E.A.C. (Revenue Assistant). The Revenue staff of the District work under him.

(d) E.A.C. (Treasury Officer). Keeps all Treasury accounts.

(e) E.A.C. (General Assistant). Available for assistance at the D.C.'s discretion.

*Sessions Judge*.—One per District or two Districts.

Has powers beyond those of a first-class Magistrate and tries murder cases with powers of the death sentence.

*Honorary Magistrates* (unpaid) are appointed with first, second or third class powers after undergoing training with a Magistrate.

*Judicial Powers.*—Other powers are:—

First-class magistrate: two years' imprisonment. Rs. 1,000 Fine.  
Second-class magistrate: six months' imprisonment. Rs. 200 Fine.

Third-class magistrate: one month's imprisonment. Rs. 50 Fine.  
(Certain first-class Magistrates are awarded powers of seven years' imprisonment under Section 30, Criminal Procedure Code.)

(2) *Powers of appointment.*—

(a) A Deputy Commissioner appoints clerks, patwaris, kanungos, lambardars, zaildars.

(b) A Commissioner appoints Naib Tehsildars on the recommendations of D.C.s.

(The above are not "Gazetted officers.")

(c) The Public Services Commission appoints Tehsildars and above, through a chain of recommendation which runs:—

D.C.—Commissioner—Financial Commissioner—Chief Secretary—Minister concerned.

(3) The Public Services Commission is therefore responsible for appointments of Gazetted Officers into the Provincial Civil Service (P.C.S.). Within this Service there is nothing to prevent a tehsildar rising to the post of E.A.C. and later D.C.

The appointment of D.C. is therefore filled by both I.C.S. and P.C.S. Candidates.

(4) *Powers of Appeal.*—

Revenue appeals go on through the Commissioner to the Financial Commissioner.

Judicial appeals go on through the Sessions Judge to the High Court.

(Appeals in the case of a sentence of more than five years awarded by a Section 30 Judge go direct to the High Court.)

(5) *Police* (on a Provincial basis).—

Inspector General (I.G.).

Deputy Inspector General (D.I.G.). One in each Commissioner's Division.

Superintendent of Police (S.P.). One in each District.

Inspector of Police. Several in each District.

Sub-Inspector of Police (S.I.P.). In charge Police Thana. Two or three in each tehsil.

Head Constables and Constables.

(6) *The All-India Services.*—

In 1940 the Indian Civil Service numbered 588 British and 597 Indian officers. The Provincial Civil Services are entirely composed of Indians, and the special services, Medical, Police, Forests and Public Works now contain only a very small number of British officers.

## APPENDIX V

## POLITICAL PARTIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

(1) *Indian National Congress*. See Chapter I. Includes:—

(a) *The Congress Assembly Party*.

Leader, S. Bullabhai Desai.

Dep. Leader, Mr. Abdul Qaiyum.

Represents Congress views in the Central Assembly. Has all the equipment of a party with a Secretary, Treasurer, Chief Whip and Whips.

(b) *The Congress Socialist Party*.

Leader: J. P. Narayan. Has had an adventurous career in America as a waiter, mechanic, and other sundry employment. I find the creed of this party hard to distinguish from that of the Communists. It is a cell within the Congress which by no means accepts Gandhi's idealism. Looks to a dictatorship by the proletariat.

(c) *The Forward Bloc*.

Formerly under the leadership of the late S. C. Bose. Its aims are little different from those of the Congress Party, but it advocates extreme measures in the method of the attainment of those aims. Formed in 1939, when a Congress split occurred at their annual session at Tripura.

(d) *The Nationalist Party*.

Leader, Dr. P. N. Banerjee. Owes its origin to the days when the Congress split into swarajists and "no-changers," the former having lingered on and maintained their separate identity as "the Nationalist Party," although the original issue has long since vanished. (See Chapter II.)

(2) *Communists*.

Leader, Mr. P. G. Joshi. Publishes *The People's War*, from Bombay. Previously banned but ban now lifted. Accepts Gandhi's leadership as a matter of tactics rather than principle. Aims and ideals as generally understood elsewhere in the world. The party were extremely hostile to the British authority until Germany attacked Russia, the Sikh Communists based on Meerut being particularly formidable.

(3) *National Democratic Party*.

See Chapter VI. Leader, M. N. Roy. Publishes *Independent India*; sometimes called "The Radical" or "Socialist" Democratic Party. Concentrates on the violence of its anti-Fascist sentiments, but also has a constructive programme of socialization. Founded 1940. Since it is of recent origin, it has not yet had the opportunity of competing in the elections and is at present not represented in the Assembly.

(4) *Hindu Mahasabha.*

See Chapter VI. Leaders, Dr. S. P. Mukherjee and Mr. V. D. Savarkar (Joint Presidents).

Controls a large volunteer corps, the *Rashtriya Swayam Sewak Sangh* (R.S.S.S.) which has its headquarters at Nagpur with branches throughout India (analogous to the Moslem National Guard).

(5) *Arya Samaj.*

Not a political organization, but a Hindu reform movement founded by the late Swami Dayanand Saraswati in 1882. Concentrates on the ethics of Hinduism. Sponsors D.A.V. Schools and Colleges (Dayanand Aryavedic). About 500,000 adherents.

(6) *Moslem League.* See Chapter IV.

Includes Moslem National Guard under Nawab Siddiq Ali Khan, M.L.A. (Serials 7-11 below are all Moslem organizations.)

(7) *Khaksar Movement.*

Leader, Allama Inayatullah Mashriqi. Not in sympathy with the League. Declared object the protection of Islamic culture and tradition. Since these are also objectives of the League, its policy is obscure. At one time numbered over 1,000,000. In the past has assumed a militant attitude. Banned by Government in 1941, but ban now lifted. The leader is a Pathan who initiated the movement in the Punjab in 1931. Set up their own Relief organization during the recent Bengal famine.

(8) *Ahrar Movement.*

Founded in the Punjab in 1934. A Moslem group in close sympathy with the Congress, the latter using it as a handle to counter the claims of monopoly of the League. Combines a programme of religious zeal with rural economic improvement.

(9) *All-India Shia Political Conference.*

President, Syed Ali Zaheer. The two Moslem sects of Sunnis and Shias have in the past displayed bitter enmity on certain occasions. (Shias regard Ali as the lawful Khalif and successor of the Prophet.)

The Shia Conference has not yet accepted Pakistan. About a quarter of Indian Moslems are Shias.

(10) *Jamiat-ul-ulema-i-Hind.*

An organization more theological than political, but has supported the Congress programme in the past. President, Maulana Hussein Ahmed Madri.

(11) *Khudai Khitmatgars.*

Founded 1929 by Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan in the N.W.F.P. (Lit. "Servants of God," but generally known as "Red Shirts.") Fully support the Congress programme.

(12) *National Liberal Federation.*

See Chapter VI. Formed in 1918 as the result of a Congress split between moderates and extremists. After unsuccessfully contesting the elections, it gave up appearing as a Party and has now settled down to a role as a political Brains Trust.

(13) *The Akali Party.* See Chapter V.

In addition there are many other organizations of fluctuating importance such as *Momins* (Moslems), *Kisans* (a peasant organization which started under the patronage of the Communists), the *Justice Party of Madras* (a non-Brahman party opposed to the Congress), *Ahmedis* (a Moslem religious organization based on Qadian in the Punjab, who regard their founder as a modern prophet), and others. Recently candidates have appeared as "Independents," a movement all to the good. The author apologizes for any changes which may have taken place since this information was framed. Minor discrepancies are inevitable.



## GLOSSARY

*Every Indian word over which there might be doubt and which is used in the text appears in the Glossary.*

### A

ACHKAN	..	..	A long coat buttoned high at the neck and down the front, worn by Indian gentlemen on ceremonial or particular occasions.
AHIMSA	..	..	Non-violence, harmlessness.
AHLUWALIA	..	..	The family name of the ruling family of Kapurthala. Derived from the village of AHLU near Lahore.
AKALI	..	..	Lit. "eternal one." Originally a Sikh devotee of Guru Govind Singh. Now the adopted title of the main Sikh politico-religious party.
AKHAND	..	..	Undivided. (AKHAND - HINDUSTAN = "United India," the slogan of the Hindu Mahasabha.)
ARYA SAMAJ	..	..	See Appendix V.
ASHRAM	..	..	A home for research and study. An institution, on monastic lines, but not necessarily of religious application.
AZAD	..	..	Free. Applied to the Sikh counter-claim to Pakistan for an area to be known as "Azad Punjab," sometimes called "Akalistan."

### B

BABU	..	..	A Bengali term used all over India to denote a Clerk or Accountant.
BANDE MATARAM	..	..	Literally "Hail the mother." The National hymn adopted by the Indian National Congress.
BARANI	..	..	Land irrigated by rainfall as contrasted with canal or well irrigation.
BHISTI	..	..	Water-carrier. An occupational caste. Usually a Moslem.
BOHRA	..	..	A sect of Ismaili Shia Moslems. Traders.
BURKA	..	..	The complete form of purdah as represented by a dress which envelopes the wearer from head to foot, with only a small cloth mesh-work through which to see and breathe. A Muhammadan garment.

### C

CHAMPAK	..	..	A sweet-smelling blossom used for ceremonial garlands.
CHAPLI	..	..	A leather sandal.

CHARKHA ..	..	A spinning-wheel.
CHARPAI ..	..	A bed. Usually a wooden frame with a rough rope or newar (broad woven webbing) base as mattress.
CHAUKIDAR ..	..	A watchman.
CHOTA ..	..	Small.
CHUMAR ..	..	Leather-worker. Tanner. Low-caste Hindu.

## D

DAMRU ..	..	Small drum shaped like a sand-glass.
DIARMA ..	..	Right course of action; right conduct; duty.
DOAB ..	..	Lit. "Two waters." Hence the land in the Punjab between the Beas and Sutlej Rivers.

## G

GADAR ..	..	Revolution, mutiny.
GADDI ..	..	Lit. Cushion, hence Throne.
GRANTH SAHIB ..	..	The Sikh sacred book.
GRANTHI ..	..	One who reads the Granth Sahib. Sikh Priest.
GUJAR ..	..	Origin very doubtful. Said to be descended from the White Huns. Now an occupational caste of milkman or cowherd.
GUR ..	..	Raw sugar. The boiled juice from sugar-cane after consolidation.
GURU ..	..	Teacher. Usually of religious application.
GURMUKHI ..	..	A variety of script in which the Punjabi language is written. Used particularly in Sikh religious and secular literature.
GURDWARA ..	..	A Sikh temple, or any building adapted for Sikh worship.

## H

HARIJAN ..	..	Untouchable. Now known as "Scheduled caste." (Lit. people of God.)
HAZRI ..	..	Breakfast.

## J

JATTHA ..	..	Armed body of men.
JHATKA ..	..	Meat killed according to the Hindu and Sikh method of severance of the head at a stroke. (Lit. "stroke.")

## K

KABAB ..	..	A method of roasting meat.
KARMA ..	..	Destiny. The doctrine of existence conditioned by the sum of good and evil action.
KHADDAR ..	..	Home-spun cotton cloth.

KHALSA .. ..	Lit. pure. Applied by Sikhs to denote their community.
KHASSADAR ..	A Frontier tribesman paid by Government for local protective purposes.
KSHATRIYA ..	The warrior caste of Aryan India.
KUNDA .. ..	Double-edged sword, regarded by the Sikhs as their national emblem; not to be confused with the Kirpan, the Sikh dagger.
KURRA PARSHAD ..	Candy sugar.

## L

LAPAI .. ..	The repair of walls by smoothing them over with mud mixed with cow dung. The result is to give a clean finish to a house or room.
-------------	---

## M

MACHAN .. ..	A platform or tree shelter for purposes of big game shooting.
MAHANT .. ..	The owner of any Hindu temple property. Not necessarily a man of any spiritual virtue himself.
MANTRA .. ..	A Hindu prayer or chant, or incantation.
MASALCHI ..	Originally a torch-bearer; now used to denote a kitchen servant.
MAULVI .. ..	A learned Moslem; sometimes used to denote a Moslem priest.
MELA .. ..	A Fair, or country gathering for a celebration.
MIRASI .. ..	A musical caste.
MOCHI .. ..	Leather-worker, particularly of shoes. Occupational caste, either Moslem or Hindu.
MULLAH .. ..	A Moslem priest or holy leader. Usually in charge of a Mosque. Of greater influence than the Maulvi.

## N

NIHANG .. ..	Wandering Sikh religious mendicant. They cloak their idleness in a display of religious zeal. To be seen at any of the Sikh "melas," dressed picturesquely in dark blue and yellow and armed with swords and spears.
--------------	--

## P

PANDAL .. ..	A large ceremonial tent or hall.
PANCHAYAT ..	Originally a Committee of five members locally appointed to settle village affairs. Now not necessarily confined to five members.
PANDIT .. ..	A Hindu title. In its strict sense applied to those versed in the Scriptures, but used commonly to denote a member of the Brahman community.

PARATHIA .. ..	A variety of bread fried in butter.
PATWARI .. ..	See Appendix IV.
PAKAURA .. ..	Vegetables fried with maize or grain flour.
PAGRI .. ..	Turban.
PILLAU .. ..	Rice cooked with spices.
PIR .. ..	A Moslem saint.

## S

SADHU .. ..	A Hindu ascetic.
SAG .. ..	A kind of spinach.
SANAD .. ..	A charter or grant. Now awarded as a certificate for meritorious service.
SANYAGI .. ..	A Hindu ascetic.
SARANGI .. ..	Stringed musical instrument.
SARDAR .. ..	Title of respect, used both in speech (Sardar Sahib) or as a suffix in writing.
SATYAGRAHA .. ..	Lit. "soul-force" or "truth-force." Hence "non-violence."
SEVADARNI .. ..	Woman welfare worker (Sevadar, welfare worker).
SHAHUKAR .. ..	Banker.
SHIKARI .. ..	Hunter.
SWARAJ .. ..	Self-rule, Independence. "Purna Swaraj" means Complete Independence.

## T

TABLA .. ..	Drum shaped like a small barrel.
TAMASHA .. ..	Any form of celebration or display.
TEHSILDAR .. ..	Official in charge of a Tehsil. See Appendix IV.
TELI .. ..	Oil presser. A common occupational caste in the villages.
THAKUR .. ..	A petty chief, frequently the member of a ruling family or a landowner within a larger State.
THANA .. ..	Police Station.
TODDY .. ..	Country liquor distilled from the cocoanut.
TONGA .. ..	Two-wheeled cart with a folding roof.

## V

VINA .. ..	Stringed musical instrument.
------------	------------------------------

## Y

YOGA .. ..	A Hindu system of philosophy and practice of esoteric meditation, having as object the union of the individual human spirit with that of the universe.
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## Z

ZAIL .. ..	A sub-division of a tehsil. See Appendix IV.
ZAMINDAR .. ..	Landowner. (Zamin=Land.)
ZANANA .. ..	Portion of a house set aside for the women.

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